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MEXICO ON THE VERGE

E. J. DILLON

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BY

E. J. DILLON

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TO MY FRIEND

FERNANDO TORREBLANCA

A TYPICAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NEW PROGRESSIVE ELEMENTS
OF REGENERATE MEXICO WHO DRAW STIMULUS FOR SOCIAL
ENDEAVOR FROM INTENSE FAITH IN THEIR COUNTRY'S
CAUSE, UNFLAGGING HOPE IN ITS DESTINIES
AND A HIGHLY CULTIVATED SENSE OF
DUTY TO THEIR FELLOWS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE following pages offer a brief presentment of the main factors of the Mexican situation which is now entering upon a critical stage. The subject is tabooed by the average student of contemporary politics on the ground that it is purely regional, devoid of interest and without noteworthy bearings on the principal currents of the world's history. As a matter of demonstrable fact, it is the reverse of all that. Mexico to-day is the subject of an experiment which, whatever the upshot, bids fair to link it for all time with one of the most fateful and far-ranging changes in the basic relations of political communities with one another. In sooth it is no exaggeration to say that the first deciding move in the work of transfiguring those relations and setting the State-systems of the world upon wholly new foundations is now being made in that Republic. And this essay is scarcely noticed by statesmen or politicians while its trend is not realised even by the races and peoples to the course of whose life-history it is about to impart a new and chartless direction. Thus the tide of cosmic innovations which some observers are anxiously watching in Eastern Europe is in reality rolling away from that quarter of the globe to the shores of the Mexican Gulf and the southern banks of the Rio Grande where new precedents are being forged and strange doctrines promulgated which the near future may see eagerly adopted in the older Continents with results which it would be idle to forecast. It is the little beginnings that call for the closest attention but unhappily the statesmen who could and should scrutinise those which are certain to lead to the most momentous consummations are at present absorbed by futile wrangling and barren enterprises.

In attempting to determine the forces now at work, to measure their intensity and foreshadow some of their probable effects, the writer strove to purge his mind of bias and his findings of blame and praise. The latter aim was all the more easy of attainment in that the law of cause and effect takes no account of morality and that the principal politicians, the results of whose follies and failings are now being visited upon the ill-starred Mexican people, have passed beyond the reach of censure, bequeathing to others, as they departed, the fair inheritance with the heavy curse attached. For the course of Mexican history, every page of which is framed with a black mourning border, bears a curious likeness to that of ancient Greek tragedy wherein grim requital fastens upon the innocent with the deadly grip of cruel fate.

The following analysis of the national and international difficulties which Mexico in the person of General Obregón has now to tackle will be found to differ from the views current in the United States which stand for the real beliefs of some and for the ardent wishes of others. Whether this non-conformity of the writer is a defect or a merit, coming events will show. Despite strenuous efforts he cannot claim to be absolutely impartial—no historian has ever reached this ideal. But at least he is sincere and disinterested. No sensible person imagines that all the evils which a decade of lawless orgies has inflicted on the Mexican people or all the vices engrafted on certain sections of it can be dislodged in a twinkling. There are some indeed which cannot be displaced by ordinary methods at all. Some devils, we are told, it is impossible to exorcise even by prayer and holy water. The circumstance should also be borne in mind that in public affairs there is one kind of slowness which ripens and another which rots, and that the latter was a characteristic of the Carranza régime while the former marks the methods of Obregón.

Foreigners who possess material interests in Mexico generally wear blinkers, keep only their particular goal in sight, believe in their own methods to the exclusion of others and are impatient of contradiction. If some of the remedies which they confidently propose are specifics at all, it is often only against imaginary diseases, or artificially implanted vices. Such readers may well take exception to much in these pages and indeed to any study of the subject emanating from a detached onlooker, and if they would read an exposé of the matter entirely to their liking they must write or dictate it themselves, as not a few of them are wont to do. Among them are many who, in their haste to pass judgment on the general problem which they confound with their own particular interest in it, take no pains to understand its deciding elements, while the credulous and easy-going are misled by the wild stories deliberately circulated not only in the United States but also among the foreign residents of Mexico.

"Is it a fact," several distinguished Americans asked me in Washington last April, "that Villa insists on being represented in Obregón's cabinet by one of his partisans, and what effect will that have on Mexico's foreign policy?" I answered—"It is just as likely as that Eugene Debs is about to pitchfork one of his comrades into the Harding administration." "Yes, but here is the American newspaper that makes the statement. What do you say to that?" "Only that paper endureth all things which publishers or capitalists pay to have printed on it." My interlocutors frowned and fell silent.

CHAPTER II

Mexico's Transformation

The Turks, of all races on the globe, have a proverb which says that fire and faggots, bloodshed and banditry, are sorry reformers. And what to English-speaking peoples may seem stranger still than the nationality of that saying is that its truth has at last been brought home to Mexico, to that restless republic which for years has been, seemingly, endeavouring to heat her house with sparks. And she has already begun to profit by it. A new spirit is springing up everywhere and new men are embodying it, a spirit of justice on the part of the country's leaders and an incipient respect for law and order among the rank and file, and the outside world takes no note of the change.

The bulk of the nation—the people who paid and still are paying the heavy cost of all the revolutions, rebellions and risings—needed no arguments to convince them. They, indeed, had seen and suffered enough to convert them to pacificism long ago, had they stood in need of conversion. The obstacles in the way of law and order were never of their making. The main difficulty, which until quite recently seemed insuperable, was to inoculate the leaders of the people with that salutary doctrine of peaceful evolution and to render them immune against the bait offered by interested foreign mischief-makers. And of effecting this even optimists despaired. For, whenever some semblance of a Government emerged from the reek and gore of civil war, there always remained a nucleus of agitators who, egged on by outsiders, continued the subversive work and played the part of a Bickford string, connecting make-believe ideals with bombism and bloodshed. Ideals? They knew not what they are. The English Revolution was mainly religious. The French Revolution was largely social. Most of the Mexican "revolutions" were neither, and as a consequence they often degenerated into a sequence of highway robberies. The last change of régime was a noteworthy exception. For it was the work of a few upright, selfless men who voiced and executed the will of the inarticulate people and satisfactorily answered the question so often put by foreigners: "If the Mexicans disapprove their Government, why do they not overturn it and set up a better one?" This has now been effected by a truly progressive group of democratic leaders whose watchword is law, justice, equal opportunity for all, and whose moving spirit is General Obregón.

Anarchy and violence are apparently now at last about to pass into the history of an epoch that is no more and are to be followed by a period of strenuous building up, of moral, intellectual and economic development, of friendly intercourse with foreign peoples whose co-operation is openly recognised as an indispensable condition of success. For the governing body is at last of one mind with the bulk of the people and is determined to turn the sword into a ploughshare and the battlefields into pastures and corn-growing lands.

While war is still destroying the achievements of civilised man in Europe, Asia and Africa, it looks then as though Mexico had really inaugurated an era of internal reconstruction—that Mexico of which it was recently and truly said that its normal condition was internal strife and anarchy. Even the casual observer can entertain no doubt that a vast change has recently come over the people and—what is more to the point—over those who now shape its destinies. To determine in advance the final outcome of this change, especially in view of the system of obstruction with which it has to cope abroad, is a task for a prophet. The utmost that a conscientious chronicler can undertake is to describe and characterise its principal signs and tokens. And such a one will have no hesitation in qualifying these as eminently favorable.

My opportunities of observation have been exceptionally great. I have journeyed with General Obregón over thousands of miles of the Republic, considerable portions of which were already known to me under the Carranzist régime, when soldiers had to escort the trains; when we had to spend the night at Saltillo or San Luis Potosi lest brigands should derail or blow up the carriages and kill, rob, or hold to ransom the passengers.

In the month of March, 1920, the late President Carranza, in the course of an interesting conversation I had with him, assured me that he could not return the railways to their owners because no private company could run the trains in the face of such constant perils. All trains had to be accompanied by escorts of soldiers supplied by the State. But in lieu of rooting out the pests which thus preyed upon the people, he was preparing to have a line of blockhouses constructed along the principal railway routes with a view to reducing the number of outrages and rendering travel less insecure. That reminded me of the method applied by a Russian Commune to combat the cholera; they purchased five hundred coffins! The idea of defeating Villa, for example, never seems to have entered his head as a plan to be speedily realised. Neither had he any grounded hopes of quelling General Pelaez's rebellion in the South where the proprietors of the oil fields were compelled to pay tribute for their protection to the leader of the insurgents. And when I, an unarmed foreigner, desired to cross the Sierra from Oaxaca to Salina Cruz, it was to the rebel General Mexueira that I had to apply for a safe-conduct. But although I had absolute confidence in that General's good faith, I had none at all in the value of his safe-conduct outside his own district. For I was warned that there was a bandit zone between his troops and those of the Federal Government through which I must pass and where the highwaymen not only took the property of the travellers but completed the work by taking their lives as well. A journey of six or seven days across the mountains in those conditions was not particularly attractive. And as I could not get any one to accompany me I had to give up the plan and alter my route.

Whithersoever I journeyed, I found the people ground down by crushing exactions, terrorised by rebels, bandits, Federal soldiers and in perpetual dread of what the morrow might bring. In the State of Michoacan and elsewhere I visited manor houses on large estates—haciendas is the Spanish name—which a few years before had been luxuriously furnished, but having been gutted by a succession of bandits, were now in an advanced state of decay. They had no baths, hardly any furniture and that of the most primitive kind. The walls in some of the rooms were riddled with bullet holes, the roofs open to the rain. And the proprietors told me that they were afraid to spend a peso in repairing their homes lest they should be wrecked again. Some of these great landed proprietors, beggared and desperate, were preparing to go into voluntary exile in order to escape worse misfortunes than those which had already overtaken them. And since then they have emigrated to England, Spain or the United States.

Thus a dense cloud of depression overhung the country and paralysed the people. Enterprise was throttled. No capitalist except the oil companies would invest money or labour in any undertaking, however promising, because he could never be sure that the fruits of his labour would be his to enjoy. Indeed, the experience of the recent past had taught him to feel that he was working for others—for those who neither toil nor reap but merely harvest in what they have failed to destroy. And not only the products of the soil, but the land itself was occasionally taken from its lawful owners and given to favourites of the Supreme Chief. I saw several houses, which, together with orchards and fields, had been disposed of in this way, and I was told that the man to whom they had been presented, fearing lest they should be restored by some subsequent government with a conscience, had made hot haste to sell them. While I was in the State of Jalisco an acquaintance—a European—told me that he had lost his house and land in this way and his appeal to the Supreme Court had only elicited a confirmation of the arbitrary decree. He added, however—and this is the point of the story—that a proposal had recently been made to him to spend three thousand pesos in bribing a certain individual who undertook to have the *irrevocable* judgment of the Supreme Court reversed. Thus justice, the basis of all human society—was turned into its opposite by the very men who were justifying their revolution and their tenure of power by the necessity of establishing it on a solid foundation.

A severe judgment has been passed upon the Carranza régime by the Mexican press of to-day. They describe the late President as a self-centred dictator who violated the laws, oppressed the people and was responsible to no one. Indeed, "there were no responsible persons anywhere," writes one of the press organs of the capital. "A few of the independent newspapers did, it is true, call loudly for a return to morality and integrity in public departments and demand that the chiefs of the bureaucratic gang be called to account for their misdeeds. But their cries were in vain. Nobody was answerable for anything. . . . From the Minister to the usher each one nudged the other and gave a look of mutual understanding at his neighbour, casting a side glance at Don Venustiano the while, as much as to say: 'The Chief has to answer for us.' And the Chief . . . never deemed himself bound to offer explanations to any one of the good or bad use—and it was almost invariably bad,—of his versatile powers. . . . Believing himself, in virtue of the Constitution of Guadalupe, to be exempt even from the last judgment he was content to contract his nostrils. . . . Mexico's peril lies in the camarillas, in the parasites, in the abject and degenerate types who eschew fair play in the strenuous struggle for life and support themselves by selling their flattery."[1] And one must add that it was precisely such types as these that were courted, "atmosphered" and bribed by foreign interests for their own purposes.

Such was Mexico's condition down to April, 1920, and Carranza expected it to last. To my question whether he discerned any clouds on the political horizon, he gave answer: "None." Then added after a brief pause: "Possibly a few tiny cloudlets in the guise of local riots after the elections. But nothing more serious. The population is contented." That was the President's mature judgment in the latter half of March. Nor did he modify it until he set out with a cargo of gold and a multitude of parasites on his journey to Vera Cruz which led him to the end of his earthly career. As for his tragic death, everything possible was done by the leaders of the revolution, and in particular by General Obregón, to save his life. But in vain. A plain-speaking, straightforward Mexican whom I met in Sonora thus explained the sad incident epigrammatically: "Carranza had with him a great quantity of gold and was surrounded by a gang of robbers. Is it a wonder that he was killed?"

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[1] Cf. *La Revolucion,* 14 de junio, 1920.

Since May, 1920, a complete transformation has been undergone by the country, and it is interesting to note the people's mental reactions with the purer and exhilarating moral atmosphere created by the new régime. I had observed the beneficent change everywhere among all classes and in all walks of life. I accompanied General Obregón on his various journeys from Mexico City to Guadalajara, Colima, Manzanillo, Mazatlan, Culiacan, Guaymas, Hermosillo, Nogales (Sonora); then on his electoral campaign to Puebla, Tlascala, Atlizco, Tehuacan, Oaxaca, Orizaba, down through the States of Chiapas, Tabasco and Yucatan, and back through Vera Cruz to the capital of the Republic. Our trains were not escorted by soldiers, we generally travelled in second-class carriages,[2]—mingled with the people, listened to what they had to say, observed their demeanour towards the new authorities, and learned their grievances and aspirations. The reflections suggested by what we saw and heard were not unlike those which Arthur Young received during his travels in pre-revolutionary France.

Already the Government is assiduously repairing the damage caused by its predecessors and their enemies. The railways are being returned or about to be returned to their owners. Rebellions have ceased. Even Villa, who for years was the ineradicable plague of the country has repented and found salvation, and he and his partisans have become ardent tillers of the soil. The Government is dealing magnanimously with all its enemies. Gambling hells have been closed peremptorily and without a day's grace, wherever the writ of the

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[2] There are only first and second-class carriages in Mexico. We occupied carriages filled with workmen and peasants. We ate and slept when and where we could. On one occasion I induced the head of a railway company to offer a special carriage to General Obregón, but the privilege was gratefully declined.

Federal Government runs. The liquor laws are being rigorously enforced. The autonomy of the individual States—despite the undesirable results which it occasionally produces—is being respected by the central Government. The army has been materially reduced. The law everywhere is being left to take its course. Travelling is once more perfectly safe, and it looks as though in truth a new era had already begun. In a word, this is the first of Mexico's recent revolutions after which, to use one of Obregón's winged words, it is not necessary to liberate the nation from its liberators.

CHAPTER III

MEXICO IN CARRANZA'S DAYS

THE task which confronted Obregón and his fellow-workers as soon as they took over the reins of Government was truly formidable. Even a past master in statecraft might well shrink from undertaking it when surveying the situation, taking stock of the available instruments and drawing up a plan of action. To my thinking the two easiest problems of all, which might be settled speedily and satisfactorily with a reasonable measure of good will and readiness to give and take on both sides—foreign relations and finances—bid fair to become the most arduous, because complicated by a number of extrinsic issues. Foreign relations really mean intercourse with the United States Government, and that connotes compliance with the principal demands of the American oil companies.

As for the task of internal reconstruction, it is literally deterrent in virtue of its magnitude. On the part of the principal reformer it calls for a resourceful brain, an iron will and a considerable number of years in which to carry out a settled policy. And even these conditions are hardly sufficient. The man of destiny who has embarked on the venture requires to be seconded by a staff of honest, eager lieutenants who understand and sympathise with his aims and can adjust means to ends. And they are not easy to find. Hitherto in Mexico the best intentions of a leader were baffled and his programme altered by the exaggerated zeal, ignorance or personal ambition of his followers. An instructive example is afforded by the pristine agrarian plan drafted by Emilio Zapata, the pedantic construction put upon it by his adviser Palafox, and the utter fiasco in which it ended. The bulk of the Mexican people are relatively easy to govern. They are peaceful, patient, forbearing, industrious, moral and on the whole better than many more fortunate communities scattered over the globe. They possess a normal number of gifted individuals, and if they enjoyed the benefits of a stable, honest administration and efficient educational establishments, their country would undoubtedly be among the most prosperous on the planet.

But for the moment they lack these requisites and much of what they imply. And one of the consequences is the extreme difficulty of finding a capable, honest and well trained set of men to form the rank and file of the administration. As General Obregón often remarked to me: "To make a code of good laws is child's play as compared with the selection of men who will administer them impartially and in the right spirit. It is of infinitely greater moment to have high-minded officials to apply the laws than to have legislators well versed in the intricacies of Roman jurisprudence to draft them." No matter how clear visioned the Chief of a reforming Government may be, he is powerless to help his people without efficient instruments. If the instruments break in his hands, he is no better off than a tyro. And that, in my opinion, is the standing danger in Mexico where communications are difficult and the representatives of the local Governments necessarily enjoy the full measure of discretion connoted by the term "State sovereignty." Hence, unless the authorities of the individual States are actuated by the same spirit as the President, they may baffle, instead of furthering his most beneficent schemes of reform. And that has already come to pass. As the Bulgarian proverb picturesquely puts it: "The lesser saints are the ruin of God."

No one who really knows the President will hesitate to testify that he is the one man in the country capable of coping with the task of reorganisation. And if by the machinations of outsiders he should be kept from solving the many-sided problem, none of his fellow countrymen is likely to succeed in working it out to a satisfactory issue. That is why so many are eager to thwart him and bring about intervention. A faint and far away notion of the situation of the country in the beginning of the year 1920, and of the difference wrought in it since then, first by the Provisional Government of Señor de la Huerta, and especially by General Obregón, may be gathered from the impressions which I received during my travels in Mexico in January, February, March and May, 1920, as compared with those which have been borne in upon me since then.

It is no easy matter at the best of times to gauge aright the internal conditions of any foreign country with a view to forecasting its future and ascertaining the bearings of those conditions on its international relations. And when the country under examination was the Mexico of Carranza, one found oneself attempting to decipher the hieroglyphics of national and international politics. For the Republic in his days possessed a vast variety of aspects any one of which might fascinate the observer's gaze to the exclusion or partial effacement of the others, warp his judgment and render his conclusions worthless. For the administration of that Dictator left nothing undone to take foreign visitors in hand and prepare the impressions which he desired to convey. And many more or less independent Americans from the United States, to say nothing of those who had axes to grind, allowed themselves to be hypnotised or used as semi-conscious agents of his propaganda.

It was quite possible, under that ruler, for a foreigner, especially if he were ignorant of the history, language and psychology of the Mexican people, to pay a flying visit to their fascinating country and even to reside there for a short while and return with a picture of its present condition and future outlook as different from the reality as were the distorted shadows of Plato's imaginary men on the cave-wall from the human beings hidden from the eyes of the spectators. A tourist might, for example, start from Vera Cruz, travel to Mexico City, spend a few weeks in that bright capital, visit Puebla and Guadalajara and return via Queretaro and Laredo without suspecting that there was anything organically wrong with the greatest Latin-American Republic. The trains which started at the scheduled hours might have arrived on time at their destination. No abnormal sights or sounds would have offended the eyes or grated on the ears of the stranger, seeing that the authorities invariably adopted special precautions for keeping them away. The theatres, churches, law-courts and cinemas were as usual open and frequented. The natives, too, whom the visitor met, could with truth have assured him that the conditions of existence were much better than they had been two years before, and some might give expression to their hope that they would gradually become normal again. And the serene optimism of the authorities could hardly fail to impress him with the belief that they were confronted with no problems more fateful than those which face every normally growing and well governed State.

And yet despite the sagacity of such an observer, the unbiased character of his testimony and the correctness of the facts which he alleged in support of his conclusions, the general picture he painted would be wholly false and misleading. What such a flying visitor beheld was, so to say, the front room that had been swept, garnished and embellished, not the living apartments which stamp the dwelling with its distinctive characteristics. But there were then two Mexicos, one on the surface—smooth, polished, lustrous like a crust of ice and capable for a time of bearing the weight of a frail governmental fabric; and the other a river underneath—dark, abysmal, sweeping ceaselessly onward and rapidly eroding the layer of ice above. That the passing onlooker should take no thought of the rolling stream underneath was but natural. Surprising was the circumstance that the architects of the governmental fabric should have forgotten its existence and neglected to take its erosive action into account. They lived and breathed and worked in an atmosphere of factitious contentment and serenity which was calculated to impart to the visitor a false sense of the stability of things. Me, too, it impressed at first but without convincing. In some ways those blithe administrators resembled the self-indulgent Florentines who were enjoying a fleeting period of wild dissolute gaiety while the plague was stalking through their streets, withering human life and turning the capital into a charnel house. But the Florentines were at least conscious, if heedless, of the danger that compassed them. Not so the Carranzist rough-hewers of Mexico's destinies. These men perceived as little, suspected as little and were as self-complacent as the revellers in the palace of Babylon's last king, until the fiery finger burned the words of judgment and death into the wall of the autocratic banqueting chamber.

Now this unrealised fact that there were two Mexicos under Carranza—one of them phantasmal and the other practically inaccessible to the average outsider—is accountable for the pathetic optimism of many more or less truth-worshipping visitors to that enchanting land of unmeasured possibilities and amazing contrasts, and also for the distrust with which the new and beneficent changes of to-day are received by the public. And yet had he but swerved a little from the railway lines and ventured into the interior, or undertaken a journey outside the protected zones, kept an open eye and an unbiased mind, he would have awakened to the startling fact that the two aspects of the country were as unlike each other as the masks of comedy and tragedy. Every now and again the grim reality would be brought home to those who had eyes to see and ears to hear by misdeeds that left an indelible impress on the mind of the beholder.

During the first of my many visits to the Republic, I had several opportunities of contrasting the phenomena of the two Mexicos. I remember the case of an Englishman who had to take a railway journey of some eight or ten hours from the capital and then to pursue his way as best he could across country in the dark to examine a mine. His train started punctually, he arrived on time, and leaving the railroad pushed on at night accompanied by another man and after a lonely journey of some hours on horseback reached his destination. Having accomplished his work on the following day he forthwith returned and arrived in the capital with nothing unpleasant or noteworthy to report. He might have imagined himself to be in his native land, so punctual were the trains and so safe life and property. In a word, everything appeared to be as satisfactory as in the much lauded era of Porfirio Diaz. But the very day after the Englishman's return the train on that same line was dynamited and some of the passengers killed and wounded. He was just lucky. That was all.

A somewhat analogous experience fell to my own lot. In Guadalajara I announced my intention of returning to the United States by way of Ciudad Juarez and El Paso,[1] but before ordering my ticket I made inquiries of Mexican friends as to whether the trains were running tolerably well and whether there was really as much danger from attack by the bandits under Villa as people affected to believe. The answer I received was to the effect that the alarming reports were much exaggerated, that Villa had announced his intention to lie low after the elections in July and that the line was therefore practically safe. Circumstances, however, obliged me to postpone my journey three days. Then I ordered my ticket. Two days subsequently, however, I learned from the papers that the train in which I had meant to travel had been wrecked and many lives lost. This is what occurred. The train was accompanied by armed soldiers of whom some were in an armoured car, and others, as was their wont, seated on the roof. Two powerful bombs exploded under the train, blowing the engine to shreds, whereupon the rebels rushed up and opened fire. All the soldiers on the roof were quickly killed off and the others were prevented from issuing forth from their stronghold. The trembling passengers were conducted by the rebels to a spot a mile and a half distant, where they were robbed of eighty thousand Mexican pesos and of all the valuables on their persons. Twenty thousand pesos more were taken from the postal express car. The two conductors were hauled before Villa who shot them through the heart. The passengers' turn came next. Villa summarily ordered them all to be shot and they were duly lined up for execution. But just when about to give the order to fire he suddenly changed his mind and with tears in his eyes pardoned them, saying: "Since the execution of my friend General Angeles I have been thirsting for vengeance. That's why I blew up the train. Well, I have avenged his murder. Now in memory of him I spare your lives. You may go."

I concluded that I was lucky to have postponed my journey to Ciudad Juarez and I thereupon decided not to tempt fate by trespassing through Villa's preserves. Travelling under the Carranza régime was a lottery. If one were lucky one had merely to rough it. The only two things certain about a journey were discomfort and a military escort. Death or mutilation and robbery were contingencies about which one could never be sure. But then this disquieting incertitude was an essential characteristic of everything one undertook in the Republic. It overhung mining, farming, trading, industry, politics, finance, the administration and the régime. One never knew what the morrow might bring forth, and the first question people asked themselves when contemplating any kind of business or action, was: how will it be affected by the Unforeseen?

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[1] In early March, 1920.

Thus there was ever a Damocles' sword in the shape of uncertainty and danger hanging by a frail thread over the heads of people whose avocations took them from place to place and of foreigners who resided beyond the city boundaries. They carried their lives in their hands. That there were a few railway lines over which one might travel with some degree of safety if special precautions were taken, it would be unfair to deny. But these precautions constituted a heavy price for the boon which was paid by the State and the travelling public. The former had to provide all trains with an escort of soldiers and the latter to put up with the loss of an entire night on a journey of twenty-four hours.[2] On the line between Laredo and Mexico City, for example, the passengers had to resign themselves to spending the night at an intermediate station and resuming their journey in the morning.

Drawbacks like these brought home to me in conclusive fashion the necessity of distinguishing between the show Mexico which Carranza exhibited to ingenuous American delegates and the real Mexico as he had helped to make it and as it was known to those natives and foreigners who made it their home.

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[2] The only line on which trains could run at night was that which connects Mexico City with Guadalajara, and even there the trains were escorted by soldiers. To-day there are no escorts and trains run at night as safely as by day. I have travelled some thousands of miles already by night and by day and have been lost at night in the wilds of Chihuahua, without experiencing any serious inconvenience.

My own experience, limited in time as in space, illustrated the chances of journeying in safety if not in comfort, as well as the risks and incidentally, too, the ever-present dread which was felt by would-be travellers. From Puebla I desired to go to Oaxaca, one of the most delightful States in the Republic. Nearly all my Mexican friends, who, I may say, were staunch supporters of the Carranza Government, endeavoured to dissuade me on the ground that the journey was both uncomfortable and perilous. My travelling companion in particular held back and employed all his power of persuasion to induce me to abandon the plan. I finally told him that I would go at any rate as far as Tehuacan—about one-third of the way. During our drive from the hotel in Puebla to the station we passed crowds of men, women and children trudging along in the same direction as ourselves, and as soon as we caught sight of the terminus we beheld a vast concourse of men, women and children, mostly Indians, who filled the little waiting room, blocked the entrance, covered the stone steps and overflowed into the streets. And every moment the crowd was swelling. We could not even get near to the door. For a railway journey was a precious boon. And it was still so early that the ticket office was not open. There was no hope, therefore, of obtaining seats even if we should contrive to purchase tickets, so after having talked the matter over with a railway servant, we returned to the hotel and put off our journey until the following day. The next morning we rose at three, had our tickets and our seats by four and waited until five for the train to start. In Mexico the traveller had to rise at an unearthly hour in the morning, first because all long distance trains started early in order to make up for the loss of time at night, and second because the sitting accommodation in the ramshackle carriages was limited whereas the number of seats sold was not. Many passengers, therefore, had to stand around or hang on wherever they could.

When the train steamed into Tehuacan station I resolved to keep my seat and send for tickets to Oaxaca, whereupon my companion overcame his reluctance and resigned himself to share my fate. The journey was supremely uncomfortable. The windows of the carriage were broken, the doors disjointed, the ceilings damaged, the sanitary arrangements shocking. But the line appeared safe enough and the train was not later than trains generally are in France.

While I was in Oaxaca, however, the rebels took the station of Etla, about eighteen miles distant, cut off our water and light and caused a panic in the city. For two days I was without water for washing and was obliged to content myself with a candle after sundown. A short time previously the bands had attacked the town of Teliztlahuaca forty-five miles distant from Oaxaca, killing and wounding some persons and striking terror to the hearts of many more. On our return journey to Puebla an attempt was made to wreck our train near the station of Santa Catarina. Fortunately special precautions had been taken because we had a Governor on board. The arrangements for derailing the train were discovered in the nick of time, and workmen were set to remove the obstacles and clear the line, after which we resumed our journey, which was completed without further interruption. These incidents occurred in March, 1920.

Several of my planned visits were countered owing to those untoward conditions. Thus I had long desired to visit the States of Chiapas and Tabasco concerning which I had gathered various interesting data. But every one discountenanced the idea. While the matter was still under consideration the rebels there under Cal y Mayor attacked a passenger train from Tapachula on the Pan-American branch of the railways, fought the usual skirmish with the escort, killed several soldiers, left a number of dead and wounded on the field, and destroyed properties near the railroad valued at over a hundred thousand pesos.[3] A day or two later we learned that a powerful onslaught had been made by the rebels on the capital of Tabasco,[4] and that the fight continued for two whole days, resulting in considerable casualties to both sides. In view of these "abnormal" conditions, it was put to me that I had better postpone my visits until order was permanently restored. What that vague delay implied in years no one was rash enough to conjecture. But I was enabled to reach the conclusion that if the régime continued the interval would not be very brief, by the circumstance that President Carranza and his advisers had decided to introduce armoured cars provided with machine guns and to build blockhouses of concrete at intervals of less than three miles along the principal railway routes, at an estimated cost of three thousand pesos for each blockhouse.[5]

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[3] Cf. *Excelsior,* 3rd March, 1920.

[4] Cf. *El Universal,* 5th March, 1920.

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[5] Cf. *El Informador de Guadalajara,* 9th March, 1920. and *Excelsior,* 1st March, 1920.

CHAPTER IV

MEXICO'S LAST DICTATOR

WHITHERSOEVER I wandered in Mexico the same two faces alternately appeared, the one smilingly turned towards foreigners athwart the golden haze that hung over the principal cities and the other, basilisk-like, gazing at the ill-starred inhabitants whom it fascinated with terror. I strove to obtain a direct insight into the actual conditions of the Republic, uninfluenced by the interpretations of other people, and with this object in view I travelled about as any member of the public might, mingling with the crowds, visiting the pestilential abodes of the poor, the outcasts and the criminals, conversing with the Indians and keeping aloof during the first period of my sojourn from politicians, cabinet ministers, journalists, consuls and other people who had specific interests to promote or protect.

It was further my fixed resolve to keep aloof from the governing authorities altogether, unless I had good grounds for believing that a meeting between them and me would further the cause of a real understanding between Mexico and the English-speaking nations. As such an adequate reason I should have recognised either an assurance from some friend of President Carranza or of Señor Luis Cabrera that these rulers, aware of the straits, national and international, to which their policy had reduced the country, were willing to discuss the whole question with me with a view to reaching a basis for settlement on acceptable terms, or else a direct invitation from either of them to see me.

On several previous occasions I had opened pourparlers between two governments at odds with each other for the purpose of discussing the subject of their misunderstanding freely and without diplomatic mental reservations, and the results generally recompensed the effort. The last occasion was in the Summer of 1914, when Greece and Turkey were preparing to wage war on each other. After several journeys between Athens and Constantinople and long debates with Talaat Bey and the Grand Vizier on the one hand and Venizelos, on the other hand, it was my good fortune to hinder hostilities and to get the two governments to agree to a Treaty which the Grand Vizier and Venizelos were to sign in my house in Brussels. The Greek Premier actually started for Brussels and had reached Munich when the quarrel between Austria and Serbia and its menacing upshot compelled him to halt. And I harboured the hope that a similar arrangement might be come to with the Carranza administration, provided that its chiefs were conscious of the difficulties and dangers that compassed them round. Some of their own friends assured me that they were alive to the existence of rocks and shoals ahead and would welcome any feasible change of tack which would enable them to steer clear of these.

One day a gentleman who had rendered sterling services to the Carranzist cause informed me that Señor Cabrera and the President had expressed a wish to have a talk with me. Accordingly I went and called on them both. Señor Cabrera welcomed me cordially, ushered me into his cabinet and began a most interesting conversation which was largely a monologue. Mexico's actual condition, future outlook and general policy were dealt with exhaustively as were also the prospects of the Carranzist régime. And each topic was handled by the speaker, who showed a complete grasp of the theoretical side of each question, in the style of a brilliant special pleader. If Señor Cabrera had graduated in one of the best Sophist schools of ancient Athens, he could not have expounded his theses more speciously. It was one of the most masterly exposés I ever listened to. The impression it left on my mind was that if the case were thus clearly and suasively presented to an intelligent jury or to a foreign government directed by a democratic theorist, it would inevitably carry conviction and bring forth practical fruits. I further perceived, by piecing together various data which I had received from other mostly trustworthy sources, that Señor Carranza had worked out a comprehensive, rounded and ingenious plan, the object of which was to obtain the official recognition of Great Britain and France and to establish his régime on a stable foundation.

But having come from England, France and the United States where the angle at which Mexican affairs were considered was widely different from that of Señor Cabrera, I could not blink the fact that he was striving after the unattainable.

The President received me most affably. He was more communicative and less reserved than was his wont. His personal appearance, bordering on the venerable, challenged immediate respect, and the chamber with its subdued lights, mellow colours and atmosphere of tranquillity served as a fitting frame for the patriarchal figure with the flowing grey beard and the emphatic words uttered in firm deep tones. On the writing table at which he sat was a large inkstand with a silver figure of Justice. "Do you see that figure?" he asked at the close of our interview. "You know what it represents?" "Yes, it is the figure of Justice." "Well, I frequently gaze at that little statue which suggests thoughts and queries that nerve me to new efforts for the establishment of justice in the land. For justice is the one thing necessary. It is the cement that will unite the various elements of the population. Yes, in face of that little figure I often sit and meditate. . . ." I hoped he was sincere were it only by a process of self-hypnotism.

There was, however, something artificial, something histrionic in the whole scene which reminded me of my first mission to President Paul Kruger, for the purpose of ascertaining the conditions on which he would consent to terminate the Boer War. Him, too, I found in a room which formed a perfect frame for the clumsy figure of the rugged old Calvinist. A table, three chairs and a carpet on which he freely expectorated was all the furniture of the apartment. Oom Paul sat in a chair, with a huge folio Bible on his knees, apparently poring over one of the books of the Pentateuch which he read through his vast goggles. Having marked the page before closing the volume, he pushed the glasses on to his forehead, rose slowly, coughed, spat out on the floor and extended his hand to greet me. Although my reception by

Señor Carranza was not really staged, I could feel that he was intent on producing a certain well defined impression and that perceptible effort marred somewhat the general effect of his assurances.

He, too, spoke on the same lines, occasionally using the same phrases as Don Luis Cabrera. Having sketched his policy, he summarised its good results in pithy well chosen terms and with a degree of apparent detachment which befitted a successful statesman who, having achieved his life-work, could afford to view it in the dry light of history. He certainly had a clear-cut policy, showed a complete grasp of some of its bearings and displayed an intimate knowledge of the tactics by which he was resolved to carry it out. There was only one flaw in his reckoning, one unknown X in his forecast—but it was of the very essence of the problem. I could not convince him that the ship of State of which he was the master had already drifted into dangerous waters from which it was beyond his power to pilot her without altering her tack. He denied that there was a single shoal or rock on all his course which had not been carefully sounded and charted. "Plain sailing," was his conclusion.

I had heard those words on several other historic occasions and I could therefore gauge their value. Once they were uttered by the chiefs of the Constitutional Democratic party in Russia when I urged them to support Count Witte's Cabinet for some six or eight months and promised in his name that they would receive the reins of power. And when having encountered an inflexible *non-possumus,* I observed that a formidable reaction would ensue, if they persisted in their refusal, they answered that in Russia no reaction was thenceforward possible. "It is all plain sailing now," they said. At another historical conjuncture—before the first Balkan War—I went to Constantinople with a simple, definite proposal from a neighbouring Government which, had it been accepted, would have warded off the catastrophe. After having considered the matter for two days and hesitated for twenty-four hours, the Grand Vizier and the Minister of Foreign Affairs felt unable to accept my offer. "Have you no misgivings then about the immediate future?" I asked. "No, none," answered the Minister. "No fear of troubles brewing?" "Local troubles, yes. We know that Greece is fermenting, but we also know that she will have to sip her own brew. We have all the threads of Balkan politics in our hands and are not apprehensive of the skein getting ravelled." "In a word, it is all plain sailing?" I asked. "It is," he answered, "plain sailing." About eighteen months later in the *foyer* of the Vienna Opera, a man who was seated arose hurriedly and addressed me: "Do you not recognise me?" "Yes," I replied, "you are the Turkish ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs." "I wish to say that since I last met you I have often regretted that I did not accept your proposal. Turkey is ruined now. Did you know at the time that war would be declared so soon?" "I did. And it was because it was coming so soon that I had to press for your answer at once." "Why in heaven's name did you not tell me so or at least give me a hint?" "Because it was a secret which I was not authorised to reveal. Besides I gave you as much of a hint as I dared. But you told me that it was all plain sailing." "Alas, poor Turkey!" he exclaimed.

With Don Venustiano it was also plain sailing. He descried no really formidable difficulties. If I spoke of the sentiments of a large section of the English-speaking peoples, he met my answer with the statement that Great Britain's disposition was friendly and that a British Minister would shortly be sent to Mexico City, after official recognition had been accorded. As for the United States, the relations between Washington and Mexico City were never so cordial. All that was still needed to set the seal of stability on them was an American Ambassador who would present Mexico and Mexican affairs to his countrymen as they really are and not as if he were in quest of pretexts for intervention. "And in the domestic atmosphere too, all is serene and you discern no cloud at all on the horizon?" I asked, convinced that my questioning was bootless. "No, none." And then after a moment's reflection: "I do perceive one, only one cloudlet, in the shape of possible troubles after the elections. When that has drifted away, as it certainly will, the horizon will be perfectly clear and tranquil."

I left the presence of the Mexican Dictator, as I had left the presence of the Russian Kadets and that of the Grand Vizier at the Sublime Porte, with a pang of regret, akin to that which I might feel if I beheld a child playing on the very edge of a precipice and were unable to reach it in time to save its life.

That was on the 3rd of March, and nine weeks later—on the 7th of May—President Carranza was a fugitive from Mexico City, a doomed man. Some people are pursued by Fate. Don Venustiano pursued and overtook it.

CHAPTER V

EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE

HAVING myself studied and graduated in several European Universities and been Professor of Comparative Philology, Sanskrit and Oriental history, I naturally felt an interest in the educational problem in Mexico, for upon the solution it receives the destinies of the people depend. Learning my desire, Señor Cabrera kindly put me in communication with the Rector of the University, Don José Macias, on whom I called one morning, accompanied by a foreign prelate of the Roman Catholic Church. We were received with that perfect courtesy which characterises the social intercourse of educated Mexicans. None the less it turned out to be a most amusing experience, a little comedy of errors. The Rector, assuming that we were from the United States, assured us that we would recognise in the institutions and various landmarks of progress in his country mere copies of originals in our own. "The United States," he went on, "is the standard-bearer of culture and from her accumulated stores Mexico is drawing freely and contracting a moral debt which she can only acknowledge without repaying. But her gratitude is profound. She welcomes citizens of the great Northern Republic whose various dissenting preachers are sowing the good seed on a fertile soil" . . . and saying this he bowed to the prelate. I listened without committing myself, but expressed the hope that in the process he described the University at least would find it worth while to retain some features of its own distinct from those of the United States. Education, after all, ought to be adjusted to the needs of the people, which are not wholly identical with those of foreigners. Adaptation, I said, ought to be substituted for imitation.

That elaborate eulogy of the United States by one of Carranza's advisers and friends reminded me of an amusing experience which I had had years before with the late Prince Ghika when he first came as Minister-Plenipotentiary of the King of Roumania to Russia, in the reign of Alexander III. I met him at a dinner in the house of Prince Orbeliani and as French was the language of the salons the diplomatist had no sure criteria by which to distinguish the Russian from the foreign guests. Approaching me after dinner, he discanted with rapture on the beauties of Russian literature which he regretted his inability to read in the original and then passed on to the praise of the Tsardom and the Tsar—to all of which I listened with due attention and cold acquiescence, reluctant to tell him that I disagreed with his appreciation of the Tsardom and its doings. A few days later Prince Ghika met me at a court function and having in the meanwhile ascertained that I was not a Russian and that I had published over a pseudonym a tremendous indictment of the Tsardom and its works,[1] he apologized profusely for his mistake, asked me to treat his remarks at the dinner as purely diplomatical, alluded in complimentary terms to my writings which he had read and then we both laughed heartily at his misplaced compliments.

A similar development was brought about in the case of the Mexican Rector by an observation which I purposely made, implying that I came from over the Atlantic. "Then, you are not an American?" he asked in a flutter. "No," I replied. "Oh, oh, really. But what then, may I venture to ask, is your nationality?" "British." "Indeed. I am truly delighted. The British are our best foreign friends. Well, in this republic you will find that the people receive your countrymen with open arms and warm hearts. The British are" . . . and a string of compliments followed. Then came the query. "But your companion is a United States preacher surely?" "No," I answered, "he is not." "Is he a Baptist?" "No." "A Presbyterian?" "No. He is a Catholic." "A Catholic!" repeated the Rector. "My God! Not a Roman Catholic!" "Yes, a Roman Catholic prelate." The Rector was overcome by the announcement. For he had been extolling the works of the non-Catholic American preachers to the skies. . . .

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[1] *Russian Characteristics,* by E. B. Lanin.

Don José then took us to various schools and confined himself to pointing out the peculiar features of the buildings. But in the medical school I fancied I could discern signs of real vitality. There the students were hard at work, keenly bent on qualifying themselves for their profession, and the head of their institution struck me as a man of extraordinary energy and scientific method who endeavoured successfully to communicate his own spirit to the young men under his charge. That and the mining school were the only educational establishments in the country where to my own knowledge sound instruction was imparted and real progress was being made.

I asked the Rector whether I could obtain a copy of the University charter. He answered that it was being drafted. When I remarked that what was being drafted could only be a new charter and that there must have been one in existence before the decision was taken to supersede it with a new one, he agreed with me and promised to let me have a copy together with certain other documents. He undertook to send them to me that very evening. On the following day I reminded him of his promise and he forthwith renewed it. Several days later it was again reiterated. But I never received either the charter or the documents and I ought, perhaps, to add that I never expected them.

Education in Mexico has always been an arduous problem to tackle, owing mainly to the lack of funds and also to the scarcity of qualified pedagogues. A further difficulty arises from the long distances and inadequate means of communication. I visited many schools in the south and centre and was very favourably impressed by the aptitudes and eagerness to learn which the children everywhere displayed and with the assiduity and zeal of the female teachers.

The educational problem is largely a matter of funds and the circumstance that it has never been solved even approximately in a country where a vast stream of wealth is flowing steadily beyond the frontiers into foreign lands is a standing condemnation of the methods of exploiting Mexico's natural resources that now prevail.

There is probably no social class in the Republic which endures such intense physical and moral suffering as that whose members devote their lives to the upbringing of the young. From outset to finish they live from hand to mouth, never rid themselves of the gnawing anxieties of indigence or of the pain of wounded self-respect. The teachers were badly paid at best and were in some places not paid at all for months on end. This brand of unmerited indignity and semi-starvation inflicts on people who can think an abiding and festering wound. In some cases, I was credibly informed, schoolmistresses, stung by hunger and confronted with despair, sold their bodies in order to save their lives. Others sacrificed their lives in order not to lose their souls, while billions of pesos were being taken out of the country to swell the dividends of foreign companies. One can readily visualise the successive stages by which hungry, humbled and exasperated teachers reached the position that the redistribution of wealth, however effected, is a meritorious work and that there are certain circumstances in which private property may become a public crime. It is not that these theories have ever been openly taught in the schools. By no means. But they were indirectly inculcated by events and episodes known to all and well understood by the quick impressible minds of Mexican children. There is no more efficacious means of converting a people to Bolshevism than that of keeping them half starved, badly housed, without hope of bettering their lot and flaunting in their faces the wealth of their country as it passes them by to the well filled treasure houses of supercilious outlanders.

Education in the highest meaning of the term has hitherto been an unknown discipline in Mexico. It is only now being introduced under Gen. Obregón and the Rector of the University José Vasconcelos. The conditions were adverse to the experiment. Instruction there is of various kinds and degrees, primary, intermediate, superior and technical, and in some branches such as mathematics, engineering and surgery it compares most favourably with that of Spain. But the training of the mind and the building of character are hardly ever even attempted. It would be a miracle where it otherwise in a country which has long been plunged by imposed hardship and poverty into internecine strife and in a society where primeval instincts were being constantly provoked to break through conventional restraints. And yet the raw material for education is excellent. Indeed, it could hardly be better. Among the Indians I found self-restraint, patience and genuine morality more widespread and developed than among any other element of the population. Their moral and physical natures are well adjusted. The good humour of the adults and the excellent behaviour of the children in railway trains and at play, their amazing self-command and the devotion of the mothers to their offspring under the stress of want, disease and black despair are calculated to make a profound impression on the observant foreigner. Nor could a greater contrast be well imagined than that between the simple, cheerful, spontaneous hospitality of the impecunious Indian and the magniloquent verbal generosity of some of the middle-class foreigners which serves as a fanciful screen for egotism and meanness.

Mexican history is at any rate in parts a fanciful narrative which stands in a more remote relationship to recorded events of the past than did German history before the World War. It has been coloured, bowdlerised and embellished with a view to awakening or creating a sense of artificial patriotism in the young generation.

Towards the end of the year 1919 the National University received several requests from abroad for text books of Mexican history and was greatly embarrassed thereby. For it felt obliged to treat them as the Rector Macias treated my request for the University charter, and for kindred reasons. It was recognised that none of the existing histories was worthy of the name. By way of remedying this defect the University decided not exactly to produce a trustworthy text book but to stimulate Mexican writers to compile a book on national history with all the impartiality and the research required in works of this kind.[2]

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[2] *El Universal*, 24th March, 1920.

"In Mexico," an expert writes, "one might almost affirm that no veritably historical research work has ever been done. The narrative of past events is always employed by the compilers of our history to vent their political passions, their interest-born bias or their sentimental leanings. . . . We have succumbed above all else to the infantile vanity of creating heroes and inventing epopees. In this way the national story has come to be a sort of golden legend wherein the profile of truth disappears among the gilt and changeful reflections of fancy. . . . The people continue to be entertained with a deceptive picture of our past, whereby the patriotic conception is falsified inasmuch as it is made to rest upon a fragile web of sparkling gewgaws. Defeats are denied, downfalls dissimulated, miseries hidden, the seamy side of life, which is perhaps the largest part of it, is kept from the view of the pupils, whereby their character is weakened with a paradisaical and make-believe vision of existence." [3]

All those evils are now being remedied, the only limits set to the reforms being those which lack of funds imposes. President Obregón's careful attention to the people's needs has been especially devoted to the most pressing of them all—education. And with the valuable assistance of Señor Vasconcelos he has already worked wonders in combating illiteracy and spreading sane ideas about civic obligations. He is not only painfully aware of the root defects of education in the Republic, but he has been at great pains to discover and apply efficacious means of remedying them.

Among his many utterances to me on the subject that which made the deepest dent in my mind and memory was this: "The base of our education at present is narrow, and therefore unethical. We teach and train and equip our youth to wage the struggle for existence with the sole object of winning, and winning at the cost of others. Now that, I maintain, is immoral. Individual egotism may be a necessity, but if you make it the *root of all social organisation,* it is sterile, nay ruinous. You cannot bring up a nation and render it prosperous on such doctrines. They are superlatively immoral. Mind, I would not discourage the quality necessary and adequate to enable a youth to fight his way upwards. Indeed, that is one of the functions of education. But I would have him taught that his duty does not begin and end there. It extends to his neighbour, and his neighbour is the foreigner as well as the Mexican. He may and must compete with that neighbour, no doubt to the utmost, but it behooves him to do this fairly, and he should aid and second that neighbour whenever he can do this without damaging his own interests. For he has a duty to perform to that community which is his own country, and also a further duty toward the much larger community, which is the entire human race. Now these obligations are never inculcated upon him at school or elsewhere. To-day the boy and the young man are morally isolated—they resemble snails, each one shut up in his own shell. That is the basic error of our educational system. What I want is to have every unit brought up to feel duties of responsibility not merely toward himself and his family, but also toward his country and humanity at large. It is not enough for him to be a good Mexican. He must also be a good citizen of the world."

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[3] *El Universal,* 24th March, 1920.

Besides himself studying the grave defects of the educational system in his own country, General Obregón has communicated his zeal and interest to a number of his fellow workers with a view to changing it radically, profiting by the data of foreign pedagogic research and experience and creating the most efficient educational establishments possible throughout the length and breadth of the Republic. "The money spent in thus qualifying our people to play a desirable part in the progress of their country and of humanity will be the most profitable investment of the nation," he remarked to me one day. We talked this subject over again during our travels and I was amazed at the thorough grasp of it which his remarks displayed. Among other aspects of it, he has made a study of the system adopted by the Japanese, and while his main idea is to adjust educational methods to the needs and strivings of his own fellow countrymen, he is ready to avail himself to the full of the experience of all advanced peoples. To-day he has prepared a complete system of educational reform which, if in the concrete it bears a fair resemblance to the detailed description of it which he unfolded to me, will unfailingly regenerate the people and raise them to a high cultural and economic level. "Education," he observed to me one day when sailing on the Pacific, "is the very basis of freedom, justice and of all the other ideals for which our people are inarticulately longing. It is by means of education that we shall transform the state of chronic civil war into an era of peace, productivity and prosperity. The training of the young generation in accordance with the most approved methods and with due consideration for their special needs should be the chief care of every Government worthy of the name. Educational methods, good or bad, make or mar a people. That is the lesson taught by Germany's bitter experience. Compare the schools and universities in that country before and after the Bismarckian era. The results in each case speak for themselves. If I am elected President my first and enduring care will be to see that the new generation of Mexicans is fitted to play a worthy part in the advancement of their country and of humanity. No higher ambition could attract any man who has the will and the power to serve his country."

One night[4] General Obregón and I were returning from a visit to the capital of the State of Tlascala. The rain was coming down in torrents. The thunder claps were deafening. The darkness was impenetrable. From the old Aztec city of Cholula[5] we were slowly driving in a special tramway car into Puebla. The vehicle was without any inside lights. Occasionally a dazzling lightning flash would enable us to catch a glimpse of each other's features for a second and to note the inroads of the slanting rain. And during all that interval, from the beginning to the end of that journey, General Obregón unfolded to me his views upon education in general and upon the special needs of the Mexican people, as he understood them. I confess I was amazed at his vision, his knowledge of detail and his eye for the essential. I regretted that his words were not recorded as they were uttered.

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[4] 12th August.

[5] In the State of Puebla.

As luck would have it, however, on our arrival in Puebla, the professors and students of the University—a most imposing edifice erected by the Jesuits—were waiting in the great hall to receive him. A student—one of the young men brought up in the new-fangled notions—delivered a pompous speech in praise of revolutions against the capitalists who manage to survive these and on the necessity of turning over a new leaf. His speech was not relished by the General, who thereupon arose and unfolded his own ideas in simple, terse and suasive language which came as a salutary electric shock to the academic body. "Our whole educational system," he said, "from base to summit is an anachronism and must be abolished. We must begin at the bottom and work up to the top, adjusting instruction and training to the needs of our time and our country. What we require to-day is men who can carry on the struggle for life not, indeed, without strenuousness and perseverance, but in a spirit of fair play and scrupulous respect for the rights of others. Character is the spiritual essence of a man. That once formed all else is easy. As for instruction we need establishments in all the rural districts to teach the people how to till the soil to the greatest advantage, we need schools of crafts and arts in which to train young men to revive the lost industries and introduce new ones, we require schools of commerce, of trades, and colleges for the preparation of consuls and consular agents, and all of them with special reference to the needs of our people. What the country now wants and has long yearned for is not abstract theories, not civil war or revolution, but peace, work and prosperity. The era of violence and bloodshed is over for good. To seek to continue or to renew it would be to ruin the nation. It now behooves us all to pull ourselves together and apply the sum of our energies to productive work. That is our one anchor to salvation. It will need a tremendous effort, but the youth of the country will have to put forth that effort and their teachers must encourage and direct it."

Those were some of the general ideas. When he entered into details and unfolded his plan to men who had presumably made education the special study of their lives and whose theories he was now pulverising, genial excitement and spontaneous applause were hardly distinguishable from tumult. Professors rose, left their places, clapped their hands and shouted "hurrah." For several minutes he was the recipient of an improvised ovation, and his motor when he was leaving was surrounded by enthusiastic young men offering themselves as coadjutors in the patriotic work.

In a word, Mexico since May, 1920, has emerged from the Slough of Despond. The overthrow of the Carranza régime closed an era of chaos and confusion, and the advent of General Obregón to power marks the beginning of a new era. All the counts in the exaggerated and coloured indictment against the whole nation,—for it was aimed at the whole nation—so eagerly gleaned and so carefully filed by Mr. Fall, have become matters of history. They have ceased to characterise the Republic of to-day. Many of them owed their existence to the questionable lengths to which the rights of private property when conflicting with the needs of the community were carried, whereas all the reforms alluded to and others are being laboriously effected not only without the help, but in spite of the vigorous opposition of those who profited by those privileges. Mexico is being financially starved at a moment when she needs money more imperatively than ever before. And those who treat her thus are of the country which has received most of her wealth. It is a matter of supreme import that this deciding transformation of the Republic should become widely known. Secretary Hughes showed his appreciation of it by implicitly shelving most of the recommendations of Mr. Fall. That was a manly act worthy of its author. Unhappily he undid it by laying down a condition which being unacceptable to Mexico may ultimately have for its effect the revival of all the terms proposed by his eminent colleague. Mexico has fulfilled the essential requisites for recognition. Her qualifications have been weighed and found adequate by numerous foreign States, including such Powers as Japan, Italy, the Argentine, Spain and Germany. They would on their intrinsic merits be recognised as fully by Great Britain and France, were these countries willing to deal with the matter without reference to extrinsical considerations. The decision consequently hinges on the United States and all the full consequences of its adverse character are ascribed by Mexicans to extrinsic motives.

CHAPTER VI

PREPARING THE ATMOSPHERE

PUBLIC opinion on the Mexican outlook—such opinion as looks to established facts for its warranty—cannot truly be said to exist in the United States. The main factors of the situation as outlined in the foregoing pages are still unknown to the bulk of the nation, are indeed, one must reluctantly add, diligently concealed from it behind a tissue of fantastic notions woven by interested individuals and corporations for the purpose of working up a body of anti-Mexican sentiment sufficiently strong to enable them to carry their policy forward to a successful issue. The painful care thus taken to keep the truth from the great and generous people of the United States and to put it on the wrong track constitutes a high and well merited tribute to its innate sense of justice.

The public of the United States, known for its magnanimous impulses and its fellow-feeling for struggling peoples and in whose national life the spirit of fair play has grown to be one of the most potent elements, is being effectually deprived of the helpful guidance and check which its moral sympathies and political action would have drawn from a knowledge of the true facts. It is being blindfolded systematically by organised groups of industrial and political interests whose enormous influence is equalled only by the powerful temptation to employ it for ends which are anything but humanitarian. Their press propaganda is without parallel in history for subtlety, plausibility and efficacy. In this way the controlling and organising force in the conduct of the great Republic is kept in the hands of those few men, who being exposed to tremendous temptations and lacking the moral stamina to resist, are the least fitted to employ it. It is not necessary to stigmatise this mode of action as self-seeking or unscrupulous in order to discern the sinister consequences to the entire community with which it is fraught. One of these is the saddling of the people of the United States with political and moral responsibility for acts which are cardinally repugnant to its inner nature and which stain its history with indelible blots.

The average citizen of that great Republic and one or other of the professional moulders of "public opinion" as well, honestly believe that all the grave charges hurled against the Carranza régime are equally applicable to the Obregón administration. They hold that the long sequence of volcanic outbursts which marked the revolutionary period to which General Obregón put an end is being still perpetuated and that nothing has changed save the stern determination of the Republican Administration to strike out a policy of militant righteousness and make the new Continent safe for the latter-day Saints. And it is difficult for them to think otherwise seeing that the sources of information are being systematically adjusted for the purpose of creating this belief. One of the most influential newspaper editors in the United States,—a man who prides himself on his painstaking accuracy and scrupulous fairness—gave vent to his amazement on learning that I was returning to Mexico with my family. "No lady is safe in that restless Republic," he informed me, "and no foreign man either. Your only hope and that of all humanely thinking people is that before the danger has become real, the United States troops will be on the spot to protect you." "Have you not heard then," I asked, "that the new President is an enlightened reformer, has inaugurated a policy friendly to foreigners, is busy meting out justice to all and that life and property are as safe there as here?" "I have heard of General Obregón but I understand that he is a second edition of Carranza and is moving along the same lines as his predecessor." "Then you have heard the reverse of the truth," I retorted, "and you would do well to inquire anew into the facts." "Well, may I begin my investigation by asking you a pointed question which is a touchstone of your exposé. You are acquainted with most of President Obregón's relatives. Tell me truly, how many of them has he appointed to lucrative posts in the Government?" "Not one," I answered. "None of them has ever occupied any position in his or any other administration. They are earning their livelihood by dint of hard work and living the modest lives to which they have been accustomed. One of his brothers did present himself for election to the governorship of his native State a few years ago when General Obregón, being War Minister, might have used his influence to turn the balance in his favour but steadfastly declined to give him the least support, whereupon his brother's antagonist won the election." "Is that really so?" "It is." "Well, I never would have believed it had you not told me. It certainly runs counter to everything I have heard about him." I expressed my pleasure at having nailed one falsehood to the counter and my friend who derives most of his information about Mexico from the interested corporations terminated the conversation with the characteristic remark: "You have convinced me that there is at least one honest man in Mexico and that, no doubt, is something but it is not very much."

More interesting was a talk which I had with one of the foremost lawyers of the United States—a man who stands well with members of the Harding Administration and also with those of the Democratic party. He accepted what I told him of the new era in Mexico and displayed a keen and sympathetic interest in President Obregón. In fact he grew hopeful of the Southern Republic. But one day after having spent nearly a week in Washington he approached me with a solemn face and said: "You must be very careful when you go back to that country. Obregón is all right of course, but he is not alone. He has a curious set of people around him who stick at nothing and they would make short work of you, if they once conceived a dislike for you. Listen now to what happened to one of your own countrymen this very year. I got the story in Washington and from an excellent source.

"There was an Englishman in Mexico City, I forget his name but it was something like Danall or Dalinn. He was invited to travel with General Obregón and became a staunch friend of his. The two were often together and Obregón thought a great deal of the Englishman. But some of the other members of the Administration took a dislike to him. Well, one day the foreign guest was invited to partake of their hospitality, I cannot say whether it was dinner or lunch, but it turned out to be the last meal on God's earth which the unsuspecting stranger took. The poor fellow died of poisoning a few hours later. Be warned in time therefore. By the way, did you ever meet that Englishman or hear of him?" "Yes," I answered, "I did, and curiously enough I received the news of his death from Warsaw and from Paris a fortnight ago through a Russian Princess here. The details, as is natural, were slightly at variance with those which you have just narrated—the Englishman after the meal dropped dead in the University Club, in Mexico City. His name too was a little different—it was Dr. E. J. Dillon. So, as you see, the story has gone the round of two Continents already and has reached me, the principal *dramatis persona,* from both sources." "Do you really mean it?" "I do, and the lady in question will bear me out. It was through her that I got a glimpse of the letters that conveyed the news. Don't you now think that your kind admonition to be careful in Mexico may be useful to yourself in Washington?" "Well, indeed you surprise me," the honest lawyer added.

One fine June evening at a dinner table in New York at which some of the most influential and wealthy representatives of the foreign companies in Mexico were assembled, the conversation turned naturally upon the condition of Mexico at present. I gave it as my opinion that everything there had undergone a radical change since the day of the triumph of the revolution over the Carranza régime and that much of what had been true of the Republic down to that date was wholly false to-day. Thereupon one of the magnates assured us all that I was speaking as an optimistic foreigner, mistaking wishes for realities and that the country was at that moment on the verge of a revolution which would sweep away Obregón and his régime as thoroughly as he had swept away his predecessor. I insisted that the era of revolutions is closed but only two of the individuals present paid heed to my statement and afterwards requested me to give them further particulars. One of the others said: "Well but you who know the President personally must surely be aware that he is a doomed man. He is as you know suffering from an incurable disease which will carry him off very shortly." "No. I do not know anything of the kind. Neither does his physician who is a close friend of mine. General Obregón is strong and active and hard-working and looks as though he might outlive your children," I replied. "Well, but I understand that his doctor says the contrary. At least I have heard so."

In New York one morning towards the end of June, a professional gentleman whose work lies almost entirely in the world of journalism and letters came to see me and inquired: "Who in your opinion will be President Obregón's successor? I have been asked the question and I am very anxious to answer it but cannot. You are more likely to know than any of my acquaintances. Who is it?" "But the question is not actual yet," I replied, "nor is it likely to become so for three years and in the meanwhile the bases for an answer may change many times. Why should your friends look so far ahead?" "Oh then you have not heard that President Obregón's doctors have given him less than four months to live, four calendar months? That explains the actuality of the query and the curiosity of those Americans who are interested in Mexico." "Well then tell them from me that that story is stale enough to have died of old age last year. It was circulating in Mexico City in July, 1920. Bets were made by foreign residents, some of whom I know personally, that Obregón would never take possession of the Presidency and those bets were maintained to my knowledge down to the very night on which he swore fidelity to the Constitution. Yet he is still alive and hearty."

Among the passengers of the steamer on which I travelled from New York to Vera Cruz last July (1921) were some Mexican families on their way back to their native land. In conversation with my secretary they confided to her their grave apprehensions about the future. "We thought," one lady lamented, "that we had done with civil war and revolutions. But alas! we now have to face those horrors once more and I am in fear and trembling for what awaits us." "But why should you be afraid," inquired my secretary; "what is happening to frighten you?" "I do not know what is actually happening. I only know that in New York where we have been staying for the last few months all the Americans assured us that Mexico is on the verge of civil war, that a revolution is about to break out and that we ought to put off our journey until peace has been established by American troops. And surely they must know."

The lady was not far astray: they were the people who had foretold the previous revolutions and they were right on those occasions. They now expected a new one about June in Tampico among the troops of General Pelaez, and she believed them. As a matter of fact arrangements had been made for overturning the Obregón Administration and General Pelaez publicly accused the oil corporations of being implicated in the matter, but so far he has not substantiated the charge by producing evidence which he promised to publish.

In a word, the plain truth would seem to be that an atmosphere is being carefully created and poured round the unsuspecting American people,—an atmosphere favourable to unwarranted action of a kind which it would never countenance could it pierce the veil and see things as they are. And of all the relevant facts the most decisive are the advent to power of President Obregón and the far-ranging changes which that event has brought in its train.

In a series of articles which appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* I endeavoured to show how completely the issue between the Mexican Republic and foreign States has been transformed by those two changes in the Presidency and in the policy of the country, and to convey to the public an idea of the character, abilities and experience of Mexico's new leader. They were biographical sketches calculated to rid Obregón of his spurious character and to reconstruct the broken image reflected in the ruffled waters of revolution, and to depict him as he is. I was preparing others in which I set forth his policy and sought to prove that it is a rounded system of thought to be embodied in a graduated course of action and legislation.

But to my surprise those articles were sharply criticised in private and I learned that however indisputable the data might be, their publication was deemed to be injurious at once to the political and the material interests of those groups of American workers who had been endeavouring to influence by sharpening the Mexican policy of the actual Administration of the United States. I was further apprised that what the American people needed to have brought home to them was the hopeless condition of things in Mexico as painted in Mr. Fall's report to the Senate, as though the sun and the moon had been standing still since the days of Madero, Victoriano Huerta and Carranza. To kindle emotion and arouse antagonistic sentiment, rather than to spread accurate knowledge, appeared to be most urgently needed in those high latitudes where the threads of what might become Mexico's destinies were being diligently spun. The factors of the problem might have undergone a radical alteration. The truths of yesterday might have become the falsehoods of to-day. But all that was to be treated as esoteric knowledge and the public was not to be informed of the transmutation; it was to have the misdeeds which had passed into history kept steadily before its gaze until fascinated by the spectacle it should work itself into a fury of passion and call upon the expectant "cleaners up" to exorcise the demons of bolshevism and anarchy.

That was one of the most noteworthy characteristics of the phenomena which came within my ken in connection with the deliberate and purposeful moulding of public opinion in the United States by groups of influential individuals who call and mayhap believe themselves to be friends of the Mexican people.

Ever since the accession of General Obregón to power all kinds of reports calculated to depict Mexican conditions as hopeless have been appearing and reappearing with the forceful iteration of an advertisement and their hypnotising effect on the average reader is supremely mischievous. A number of daily papers kept publishing articles on Obregón, Calles and other ministers by the journalist Mr. Stephen Bonsal and others whose zeal outruns their knowledge. A pressman named Albert W. Fox who lives in Washington and sketches

Mexico from there published articles of a like alarming character. Here are the headlines of one: "Obregón losing hold. Reports indicate overturn in Mexico within six months. Bad influences gaining. Premier and Calles and other Leaders now listed as Bolsheviks."[1] In these ways Mexico is being discredited. A bad name is all that is needed. "I will not shed thy blood," cried the Quaker to the barking dog, "but I will give thee a bad name," whereupon he shouted: "Beware of the mad dog" and the passers-by did the rest.

Six months at the very outside—the more probable term being three—were thus accorded by a Washington journalist to President Obregón. This determination of the date is significant in many respects. Within six calendar months from March, 1921, political forces were certain, according to this remarkable forecast, to overthrow the First Chief and his Government just as throughout the summer and autumn of 1920 unnamed forces were to have hindered him from surviving long enough to take possession of his office, and bets were given and taken to that effect in Mexico City by foreign residents. General Calles and other leaders were listed as bolsheviks—and their own protests ignored. Surely the American public desires and deserves a nearer approach to the truth than those pressmen seem capable of offering them.

The revenue of the Republic is being squandered, the American people was assured, and squandered ruthlessly. "No one appears able to find out how much money goes into the Mexican treasury and what becomes of it. . . . The nearest approach to a definite statement on this score was obtained by an American (the Mexicans invariably choose indiscreet Americans to whom to make damaging confessions) within the past few weeks who was informed on one particular occasion that two-thirds of the money received would be expended legitimately by the Government."[2] How can foreigners be expected to invest capital in such a country or to object to the advent of the professional "cleaners up"!

What naïve people these Mexican rulers are who thus blurt out damaging truths to the wide-awake foreigner! They select an American as their confidant and tell him with engaging frankness: "Two-thirds of this money received will be expended legitimately," and the scandalised American forthwith has the unedifying piece of information blazoned abroad for the guidance of the people of the United States. "The foreign diplomatists in Mexico City," we read again, "estimate that there will be a new Government within ninety days or six months at the outside. Obregón," it is added, "fully realises that he is powerless to bring about the restoration of his country."[3] The President presumably must have chosen another good-natured American to whom he confided his despair, so that the United States people should get timely wind of the matter! He fully realises and frankly confesses his powerlessness in private and announces the opposite in public! He deceives his own people and confides the painful truth to hungry outsiders! What a President, or what a system of propaganda!

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[1] The *Washington Post*, 28th March, 1921.

[2] Ibidem.

The same influential organ informs the American people of the terrible turn recently taken by the economic and financial affairs of the Southern Republic. "Mexico almost bankrupt, labouring under severe economic depression, has been approaching a political crisis for weeks. The call of Congress in special session, with the ensuing disturbances in the Chamber and radical outbreaks in various centres, has brought it to a head. . . . Mr. Stephen Bonsal writing in the *Evening Post* of March 29th said that the Republic was on the eve of a severe political upheaval."[4]

All this may be excellent propaganda but it is superlatively unsatisfactory as historical narrative. Undoubtedly the Mexican Republic is passing through a period of severe economic depression, but it is largely the consequence of the financial boycott to which she is being subjected by the United States. But is there any country on the globe which can be said to be exempted from economic depression? Is it France, or Germany, or England, or even the United States? The entire civilised world is suffering from the consequences of an iniquitous war which should never have been begun and which ought to have been stopped before it had reached its catastrophic finale. And of all the nations now undergoing those consequences there is probably none better able to endure it than the Mexican. On the one hand its people have been inured to want, and on the other hand, Mexico and the United States are still among the very few countries whose finances are on a gold basis. The national debt per capita of the population is very much lower than in most States of the world. The potential natural wealth of the country is considerably greater. And the future of the people is in the hands of a statesman who, unlike so many of his foreign compeers, is neither a moralising amateur nor a decorative figurehead but a safe guide and a man of sterling character.

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[3] *New York Evening Post,* May 19th, 1921.

[4] Ibidem.

Propaganda—one of the most deadly of the scourges fostered if not created by the war which like militarism and imperialism has survived into the present—deals as disingenuously with reputations as with economic and political conditions. Thus Mr. Stephen Bonsal, we read, describes ex-President de la Huerta, "as a dangerous intriguer and declares that his followers openly call him President designate." General Calles, as we saw, is spoken of as a bolshevik, and so on to the end of the chapter.

Surely the most effective way to bring about friendly relations between the great English-speaking Republic and its Latin-American neighbour is not for writers in the press of the former country to pay it a flying visit, set up as friends of the nation, enjoy its hospitality and then give its ruler sixty days to remain in power and publicly announce a revolution against him as imminent. If the object pursued were to key the minds of the American people to intervention, this would no doubt be the proper procedure to adopt. And if we join this with the endeavours made to keep open-minded Americans from visiting Mexico and from judging its condition for themselves, we have the two expedients which constitute the tactics of the militant movement now going forward in the United States.

In European countries there used to be a class of men who gathered gold coins, filed and scraped them and without obviously defacing them obtained a considerable quantity of gold by the process. They were known to the tribunals as "coin-clippers." In the less refined political controversies of some countries to-day a certain class of propagandists practise an analogous method and when facts and arguments fail them, as they usually do, proceed to clip the honour of those whom they are unable to injure in any other way. This expedient, at all times repulsive, is especially odious when used as a weapon by the champions of people whom circumstance has made neighbours and who are impelled by interest no less than by duty to live in peace and amity.

And no Mexican public men have suffered so much from reputation-clippers as the Mexican President and his fellow-workers. They have been roundly charged with almost every offence punishable by the criminal code. I myself was completely misled on the subject of General Obregón and others before I had the advantage of meeting them.

I had heard much about the former from eminent Americans—experts all of them on Mexican affairs—to whom the principal sources of information, public and private, were easily accessible. And the portrait which I drew from the data thus liberally supplied was the reverse of attractive. Later on when I came to know him as he is, I perceived that the data were fabrications and the portrait a sorry caricature.

I should like, were it feasible, to ascribe the circumstantial and false information volunteered to me by my informants to what Goethe termed the dangerous ease with which a great man's contemporaries usually go astray about him. "That which is uncommon in the individual bewilders them," he adds, "life's headstrong current distorts their angle of vision and keeps them from knowing such men and appreciating them." But it is to be feared that in the case of the great Mexican President the true explanation lies elsewhere.

My first visit to Obregón took place while I still believed that he was one of the least reputable types of the class ridiculed in the United States as the Mexican General. Primed with this idea, I called on him one afternoon at his hotel in Mexico City. His ante-chamber was filled with typical representatives of the despised masses with whom he was hail-fellow-well-met,—of the ninety per cent set by nature in a stream of wealth which like Tantalus of old they are forbidden to enjoy. He inquired what he could do for me. I answered: "I merely wish to know how you intend to deal with the problems of recognition, of Mexico's debts, of foreign claims for losses and kindred matters when, as now appears certain, you will have entered upon the duties of President." "My answer is simple," he playfully replied, "Mexico will pay her debts and satisfy the just claims of foreigners. As for recognition, I cannot admit that it is a Mexican problem. Foreign states will recognise the lawful government of the Republic in accordance with the laws of nations. That is all. You would not suggest, would you, that any of them will make a new departure?" I arose, said that I would not trespass further on his time, thanked him for his reply, wished him good afternoon and left.

Next day a friend of his informed me that the General would be pleased to see me again, to have a more satisfactory talk with him, adding that he had been under the impression that I was one of the numerous callers whose aim was to ply him with futile questions and then to comment adversely on his answers. He intended to start in two days for his home in Nogales and would gladly receive me any time before his departure. I said that I would not trouble the General further now but might possibly be in Nogales myself in a few weeks when I would take the liberty to call on him. The next day I received an invitation to accompany him on his journey to Nogales which after a few hours deliberation I accepted.

On that journey and on our many subsequent travels, I had a rare opportunity to study General Obregón in the various lights shed by changing situations, by adventures pleasant and unpleasant, exhilarating and depressing. I saw him in his native place surrounded by his family and his kindred and neither in real life nor in fiction could one find a more perfect realisation of ideal family life than in the modest home at Nogales or the little house beside the Castle of Chapultepec. In that large family circle where representatives of three generations live and work in harmony the best traditions of old Castile are cultivated together with all that is most helpful in the modern way of interpreting life. The children are taught to be themselves, original, unaffected, modest, truthful and considerate of others withal. The parents guide mainly by example almost without perceptible effort and the intercourse between the two is natural and easy. In a word, there is a soothing and yet stimulating atmosphere of peace and happiness in the domestic circle which is felt and appreciated even by the casual visitor.

In the State of Sonora I met and conversed with General Obregón's earliest teachers and his schoolmates. I accompanied him on his electoral tour and listened to over a hundred of his improvised addresses, always with a keen sense of æsthetic enjoyment and at times with admiration for his fairness and generosity as an antagonist. He is a magnanimous enemy, free from spite and meanness. To my knowledge he possessed documents which if published would have debarred certain of his adversaries from ever again appearing on the public stage. But he declined to make use of them during the elections or indeed later unless the behaviour of the authors should oblige him to make known their misdeeds. Since then the authors have been fomenting a rebellion and the documents have set an indelible mark on both.

Obregón is one of the very few men I have met—Venizelos is another—on whom power and rank have no further effect than that of sharpening their sense of responsibility. In all other respects he is as he was. Most men can bear adversity, few can support greatness. To weak heads great heights are dangerous. Never in her history has Mexico had the good fortune to possess a leader whose message appealed with such irresistible force alike to the heart and the intelligence of a whole people, revealing their needs and expressing their hopes and uplifting their souls. Neither has any public leader ever before appeared among the Mexicans whose ideas met so many of the pressing wants of the population and fitted in so completely with the unprecedented conditions of the epoch and the country. For the conditions have no parallel in history and if the theory according to which Providence raises up men of destiny for each great crisis were aught more than a pious desire one could not discover any more striking corroboration of it than the personality and the message of General Obregón.

It is well nigh impossible for the bulk of the American people to correct by such concrete tests the misstatements about Mexico scattered broadcast for a definite purpose by professional propagandists. And therein lies the danger to peace and the fair name of the people of the United States who together with their Southern neighbours are the victims of this deplorable campaign.

Thousands of American excursionists—mostly business men interested in buying from and selling to Mexico raw materials and manufactured goods—visited the country in response to a hospitable invitation given to them by President Obregón. Many of them were able to converse with the people, exchange views with members of the Government and to keep an open eye for traces of the abuses spread over a decade of civil strife the records of which were gathered up in a bulky volume and presented by Mr. Fall to the world as a mirror of Mexico as it is to-day. And those people returned home satisfied in mind with the ample guarantees for life and property which the Obregón Administration has provided for foreigners who visit or reside in the land.

One would think that this personal contact was desirable because illuminating, educational and humanising. But it was found by the propagandists in the United States to have one overwhelming disadvantage, and on this account they set their faces against it: it tended to bring the two peoples together, to dissipate the misconceptions on both sides, to discredit the mischief-makers and thus to destroy the case for intervention. Every expedient that promised success was accordingly employed to put a stop to these excursions. One of the most singular of these efforts took the form of a letter publicly addressed to the American Chamber of Commerce which had arranged to visit Mexico City last June to take part in the International Congress of Merchants there. The appeal to decline the invitation was issued by the American Association of Mexico, and the argument employed was that these excursions form "part of a program to render futile any protests against acts and legislations of the Mexican Government, which programme if successful would render permanent the handicaps imposed upon American citizens under the so-called Constitution (!) of 1917. . . . No form of propaganda could be more effective than this." None indeed. For when Americans have seen Mexican conditions for themselves they become proof against falsehoods and half-truths which are often more poisonous than falsehoods.

Now there is but one conceivable motive for objecting to this mode of investigation . . . and it need neither be qualified nor even named.

The Americans most conversant with what is happening in Mexico are the inhabitants of the border states, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and they are profoundly struck with the vast and beneficent changes already realised in the Republic and with the admirable reforms outlined by President Obregón as part of his political programme. Having come to the conclusion that after years of floundering in the quagmire of internecine strife the Republic is at last on the high road to progress and prosperity they are anxious to see removed those formidable barriers to advancement which have been raised by professional politicians among their own countrymen and by a group of companies working hand in hand with these. Friendly co-operation and peaceful emulation are their ideals.

And the views of those near neighbours are the more worthy of note that they represent the convictions of the people who a couple of years back clamoured for armed intervention and persisted in the demand until they beheld and grasped the significance of the change inaugurated by General Obregón. Their Chambers of Commerce contain a considerable number of individuals who are thoroughly versed in Mexican affairs, are acquainted with the country, the people and the language, are impatient of revolutionary methods, eager to do business and shrewd enough to know when the lives and properties of their countrymen in Mexico are adequately protected.

And those are some of the people who now call upon their Government in Washington to end the costly and irritating boycott entailed by the refusal of recognition to Obregón's Government and to enable the Mexican people to help themselves and profit by the guidance of a leader the like of whom they have never had the good fortune to follow even when the President's name was Benito Juarez.

What impresses all those competent American observers whose judgment is most favourable to the present administration in Mexico are the many unmistakable tokens of radical betterment which have of late originated inside the Republic. They are especially struck with the decisive innovation that its policy—in so far as it was anti-American—has been reversed and is now directed by an exceptionally fine type of statesman who displays capacity for basic reform and glowing sympathies with the higher aspirations of humanity. They appreciate the extent to which his endeavours have already contributed to raise the level of thought and feeling in the community. They further dwell with satisfaction upon the decisive circumstance that General Obregón, buoyed up by the respect of political adversaries and cautious friends, regards it as his life task to evolve order out of that welter of chaos and inaugurate a series of beneficent internal reforms, after having first complied with all the just demands of foreign governments. They rejoice to see that now at last the Southern Republic has a President whose settled purpose is the substitution of morality for politics and who is effectually stemming the tide of insubordination with a solid breakwater of order and justice. They know that he has quenched the flames of civil war, scattered its embers to the four winds of heaven and bestowed surcease of bloodshed and terror upon the sorely tried population. And they regard these achievements as a pledge of still greater feats to come.

Why then, they ask, should we not assume that the new spirit of which he is the incarnation will usher in a new era of domestic peace and international amity?

Here is the gist of the answer given by the other group of corporations and politicians whose conceptions are simple, whose methods are primitive and who rely wholly upon external measures of a drastic character, leaving nothing to Nature's healing processes: "Because we cannot build upon the present until we have cleared away the consequences of the past; because Mexico having forgotten her obligations, it behooves the United States to enforce its rights; because the shadows of the bloody past warn us of the perils of the future; because there is no hope for the nation from within; because socially and politically Mexico is an Augean stable and it is incumbent upon her neighbour to perform the friendly service of cleaning it up as it has done so thoroughly in Cuba. The United States," they add, "has been imitating Nature too closely and has given a needlessly long credit to its frail neighbour. It has unwisely refrained from dishonouring her overdraft and now at last feels constrained to square accounts in the interests of all concerned, even though the innocent should fare no better than the guilty. One should be just before being generous. The Mexicans whom Obregón is leading differ hardly at all from those who were misgoverned by his immediate predecessor. They are tainted by the same vices. His ordering of things political has not fulfilled the hopes which his friends entertained. He is but a chip of the old block. Hence the salutary chastisement which the Republic has long since deserved at the hands of the United States should be administered forthwith irrespective of who is President and what his policy happens to be and of the consequences which would accrue to their own country from this energetic action." In a word, in order to escape the smoke they are ready to jump into the fire and take their country with them.

Mexicans are pained to hear such maxims of the primacy of might propounded seriously. For they know that if acted upon, their country's lines would indeed fall in unpleasant places. They are grieved to think that their too quiescent people having been victimised for years by bands of domestic miscreants and exploited by grasping foreigners may now be further penalised by fanatical crusaders of oily "righteousness" for having patiently endured these calamities. And the edge of Fate's irony would be sharpened by the circumstance that at the time when insatiable blood thirst and anarchist frenzy ran riot in Mexico, when brigandage usurped the place of military discipline, graft superseded justice and the furtherance of sordid aims was substituted for statesmanship, Carranza and his confederates, who were in a large measure answerable for that travesty of government, were treated by the United States of America as petted children, their misdeeds winked at and their power to go on perpetrating them strengthened, whereas the strong man now in the presidential chair, who is able and eager to heal the nation's wounds and impress the stamp of his creative genius on the history of his country, is to be denied not only recognition and credit but even the time requisite for the fulfilment of his solemn promises.

Mexican affairs then have entered upon a stage respecting which foreign political thought—in so far as it is interested in them at all—ranges itself either in the category of manly trustfulness or in that of swift aggressive action. Those who favour the latter course are scanning the Mexican horizon for a suitable champion of their ideas and they wistfully yearn for the rule of Diaz which they contemplate athwart the medium of foreign interests, forgetting that that highly gifted leader brandished the bludgeon of the upstart Dictator whereas Obregón wields the wand of Moses,—although unlike the Hebrew leader he may for the moment lack the support of an Aaron and a Hur against the enemies of his people.

The unbiased observer will symapthise with General Obregón who has taken over a heavily encumbered legacy and is grappling with vast liabilities which would have dismayed the world's most famous statesmen. For it is a struggle on wholly unequal terms and against overwhelming odds. It might aptly be likened to that of a Mexican David who is without his sling facing the American giant Goliath armed from head to foot. It is painfully true that time has long stood still for Obregón's countrymen,—the time that brings experience, increased knowledge and provides the motive power of progress. In the onward march of peoples the Southern Republic has persistently lagged behind among primitive cultures and exploded ideas and is now about to undergo an ordeal from which it cannot emerge unscathed except by dint of those very advantages which it has neglected to acquire.

While in this helpless condition it is being virtually summoned by a small group of foreign citizens of the nation which holds the foremost place in the ranks of progressive races to enter upon a contest for the possession of its own material resources and to prepare the most favourable strategical conditions for its mighty rival. The published terms of the challenge are naturally couched in less crude language but this is the light in which the summons is envisaged by responsible Mexican politicians and by many impartial outsiders. The ideal as presented to the American people, which has no hankering after territorial aggrandisement, is that of a fair and free competition of all the forces of science, organisation, capital and technical skill backed by political experience and military power. And this has an attractive ring which will it is hoped disarm criticism. But as Mexico is deficient in them all, is even dependent upon her competitor for her weapons and sees her case grossly misrepresented to the American public, the outcome of the contest may well seem a foregone conclusion.

For the hapless state of the Mexican people the fatuous policy of the Carranza administration is only partially to blame. Foreign exploitation of their natural resources was the root-cause. But it cannot be gainsaid that that President acted on the maxim that his country must be in standing antagonism to the United States, or that he set up the doctrine that all Latin-American republics should do likewise. The inevitable result of his efforts in this direction was to throw Mexico into the arms of her powerful neighbour without whose co-operation it must now continue to languish in darkness and misery. To-day all its domestic problems present some delicate international aspect which perplexes the native reformer. At every hand's turn he must apprehend a protest from the great northern Republic. Every revolution against crying abuses is struck barren by outside interposition. The levy of a new tax or the increase of one already in vigour may call forth a sharp diplomatic representation on the ground that it impairs the interests or infringes the rights of the citizens of the United States. The expropriation of private land and the breaking up of large haciendas which is an imperative necessity is found to interfere with the conditions deemed indispensable to the foreign pioneers and forthwith oral or written expostulations are presented. The Constitution, in which a germ of confiscation is said to lie embedded, must be not merely amended but scrapped. A dispute between employers and workmen is described as a sinister quarrel between foreigners and natives into which the poison of racial bitterness is speedily infused—a poison of which the weaker party invariably receives the larger dose. What in other countries would be an ordinary strike is made to assume on the opposite bank of the Rio Grande the formidable character of a bolshevist manifestation which cannot long be brooked by the law-abiding neighbour. Foreign agitators help create the very troubles which are relied upon to discredit the Republic. Revolutions against the Obregón administration are publicly said to be encouraged by Mexico's foreign "friends." In short, one of the consequences of Carranza's insensate doctrine of aloofness on the one hand and of foreign machinations on the other hand has been to interweave almost every fibre of the national organism with foreign rights and interests so closely, so inextricably, as almost to defy the most dexterous diplomatist to sunder them.

More ominous for the moment than aught else, however, is the circumstance that the road to domestic reforms is effectually and deliberately blocked by international issues. And until and unless they are satisfactorily disposed of, no serious and lasting betterment can be achieved in the politico-social sphere at home. Every jeer at Obregón's slowness is in truth a scoff at foreign obstructionism which is mainly answerable for it. The most genial reformer is paralysed by the American boycott. For instance, Mexico needs rail, carriage and water ways as sorely as the parched wheat needs rain, but without large credits there can be no important extension of the network of iron ways, no draining of rivers, no building of causeways. And the great financial houses of the United States have resolved to refuse financial succour until their Government notifies them that they may safely accord it. If a Cavour or a Bismarck were President of Mexico to-day he would be as powerless for good as a new-born babe, so long as the international boycott has not been raised by the United States. The foreign politicians operate with economic means of pressure and the foreign industrials with political. And in this way they have contrived to place the ill-starred Southern Republic between the hammer and the anvil.

In a word, the events of the past ten years have released potent forces on this side of the Rio Grande the perpetuation of which may thrust back the Mexican people into the ooze of chaos from which they have just emerged. That is the manifest and only possible outcome of further persistence in the political, financial, economic and journalistic campaign which is now being conducted against the Southern Republic. But the effects of the catastrophe, should it come, will not, cannot be, circumscribed at will either within geographical frontiers or class interests. When Samson dislocated the pillars of the temple and caused the death of numerous Philistines he paid a high price for his success. But at least he had reason to consider it a patriotic feat. Is this equally true of the foreign saviours of Mexico?

CHAPTER VII

The White Man's Precious Burden

Since the historic days of the First Chief a noteworthy change has, as we saw, come over the international situation. To-day Mexico is on her trial. She is about to undergo an examination which will qualify or disentitle her to take over the rôle which she has been exerting herself to play since she cut her moorings from Spain a hundred years ago and even to retain the place which she still occupies in the society of nations. And the test is uncommonly searching. Happily the Republic is personified by a man whose State-building capacity is unquestioned, who would fain steer a plain course through the bewildering maze of international intrigue, and who is prepared to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's while keeping for Mexico the things that are Mexico's, unless *force majeure* prevents him.

This lucky coincidence which the superstitious might ascribe to Providence gives the country a much better chance to maintain its independence than it would have had under any other leadership. None the less, this is Mexico's last opportunity and the work of reconstruction, by which it alone can be fructified, is being undertaken with painful consciousness of the prize at stake and of the unsurpassed difficulty of the circumstances. A decade of destructive civil war during which the Mexican Republic stood at anchor in the stream of time while other nations moved constantly forward, has dislocated various State institutions and demoralised many of the former administrators. Hence the difficulty of finding competent helpers. And yet President Obregón, in spite of his comprehensive knowledge of mankind, is an optimist, possibly because the field of international politics has not yet been covered by his varied experience. He honestly believes that in the long run one of the achievements of foreign diplomacy will be to cause the deep-rooted ethical forces of modern society to prevail on the side of humanity over the impulse towards greed and rancour. In fact he has made this assumption the pivot of his policy which he framed in a spirit of justice that borders on generosity and is pursuing with courage and constancy. It is no doubt meet that his heart should thus charitably assume the innate goodness of the great money-making corporations of to-day but one feels that his eye should be none the less sharp-sighted in seeking for proofs of its concrete existence. Underlying almost every great political movement, however noble, whether confined to diplomacy or extended to the battlefield, the scrutinising observer will perceive a more or less sordid economic interest which is almost always kept in the background and is often unsuspected. If this was a common phenomenon in the past it is certain to be equally common in the present and the future, seeing that the struggle for existence—racial, national and individual—is become sterner and more ruthless than heretofore, so that ethics and even religion have been laid under tribute in order to provide a decent vesture for sordid politics.

In this age of spurious virtues and law-made vices, the prevalent incongruous mixture of cupidity and altruism is at times bewildering. There is a marked tendency to render nations as well as individuals righteous by statute law and it now threatens to creep into international relations. In fact it is beginning already to become operative as a force. On the one hand the State is endeavouring to discharge certain functions of the Church within its own borders, and on the other the leading races are being assured by their ambitious public men that they are providentially destined to act as guardians to their semi-civilised neighbours and to deal with these, their "natural wards," as they are dealing with their own citizens.[1]

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[1] There is at present a movement headed by the Presbyterian Church in the United States which aims at extending prohibition to the Philippines and suppressing the vicious habit of smoking by legislation. In the United States at a place called Zion a New York lady visitor was recently arrested on stepping down from the train because she was wearing the ordinary short sleeved dress of New York and Washington. Morality by statute is making perceptible headway. See The *New York Times,* June 21st, 1921.

It is a new and more mischievous form of the doctrine of divine right and the grace of God. The main innovation is that it is applied to privileged races instead of to privileged individuals. Hence morality of a far-shining kind has become a lucrative policy and is being cultivated accordingly. Anglo-Saxon statecraft has instinctively borrowed and is quietly colouring for the use of its wards certain of the maxims which hitherto belonged exclusively to the religious domain and whole peoples are being rescued from "vice" by the "secular arm" almost as in mediæval times. Whether one approves or deprecates this new line of action in world polity, no statesmen among the unprivileged nations can afford to ignore it. For it is being tentatively experimented with on the Old Continent and is about to be proclaimed a political dogma or a regional doctrine on the New. The maxims ascribed to those innovating Governments being in the nature of a justification for a resolve already taken on other grounds represent at bottom concrete aims rather than general principles. None the less, a special pleader might summarise the available arguments somewhat as follows.

Progress is a law of life which operates with constancy and rigour, necessitating competition and resulting in the selection of the fittest. It actuates not merely the individuals of a race or a State but likewise the larger organised entities which constitute the international family of civilised peoples. Race thus competes with race, nation with nation and State with State. And whenever this competition ceases the result is stagnation which means retrogression. Now during the past ten years of fitful volcanic outbursts and indeed for a much longer period, Mexico had given up this pacific struggle and seemingly disqualified herself ever to resume it. Plans were accordingly woven to save her from herself and it is a grievous disappointment to the weavers to learn that they will not be needed. It is this all important fact that is at the bottom of the present and future relations between the Republic of the South and the United States. The politicians, who have been joined by the oil interests, intent upon applying their specific, maintain that the Mexican people is devoid of the elements essential to reconstruction and indeed to a fully independent nation and further contend that even if it possessed them, the Constitution of 1917 would effectually hinder their exercise. Therefore the constructive outlanders should be allowed to have their innings.

Isolation, it is further urged,—political isolation grounded on potential self-sufficiency—was the policy struck out by Carranza and it is falsely alleged that it will be followed voluntarily or involuntarily by Obregón. Now such a train of thought as a motive for political action is stigmatised by the progressive races of to-day as pernicious and not to be tolerated. Contact and competition with other peoples are rightly held to be indispensable and the ultimate disappearance of the weaker unities in vying with the stronger and more quick-pulsed is one of the dominant and salutary features in cultural and economic advancement. And it is desired that it should have free play. The quality which tells most advantageously and decisively in favour of each competing people is the subjection of the interests of the individual to those of the social organism. And in this the Mexicans are admittedly lacking. They have never yet displayed enough of that cohesiveness which is the cement of every social system. Hence they are bound to fall into a state of dependence upon their successful rival. And just as the interests and strivings of individual competitors in the process of natural selection are far from being identical with each other, nay are often mutually antagonistic, so the interests and aims of the advancing section of human kind as a whole are generally incompatible with those of the backward organisms. In the long run therefore the latter are doomed to go down before the former. Now one of the mainsprings of that social cohesiveness on which the victory depends is, we are told, the altruistic spirit infused ages ago by supernatural religion, some form of which quickens every type of civilisation. The more fully developed and the more deeply ingrained is this super-rational influence, the more readily will individual and group inspirations be subordinated and sacrificed to the requirements of the higher unit. Communities which like Mexico are the most deficient in this upbuilding power are the most likely to champ the bit and ignore the sanction for altruistic sacrifice. Hence the upshot of the struggle between the English-speaking and the Spanish-speaking populations of the new world is a foregone conclusion.

Mexico, it is added, is the most conspicuous as well as the richest of those defective countries. Individual ambitions run wild there. They are unchecked by human or divine law. Even Church influence is only skin-deep. The State is devoid of organs indispensable to normal growth. The best of them are rudimentary. Chaotic phenomena usurp the place of order and render progress impossible. The Mexican people, however great their potential innate aptitudes, have never yet made any valuable contributions to the common stock of civilisation. They have conceived no great idea, have associated their name with no helpful discovery, have in fact enriched the world with nothing but the gold, silver, oil and other forms of natural wealth which were there before their advent and some of which might still be unutilised had not English-speaking pioneers discovered and exploited them. But ever since the fall of Diaz the Mexicans have been playing the part of the dog in the manger to these enterprising foreigners. And this mischievous obstruction will no longer be tolerated. The time has come to break it.

Furthermore the world war and its consequences have, it is asserted, confronted the United States as well as other progressive countries with a dilemma, from the alternatives of which no mere theory of sovereign rights however plausible can deliver them. It is this: Either the progress of the world must be stayed out of deference to a group of purblind politicians who refuse to allow the resources provided by Nature for the good of mankind to be made accessible to those who are willing and able to use them to the best advantage of all, or else friendly enterprising foreigners endowed with these wealth-creating qualities must take them over by force and exploit them unhampered. The human race having increased and multiplied to an unprecedented extent, has need of all the available mineral and agricultural wealth to meet demands which cannot be evaded without a universal catastrophe. If these resources should be kept sealed indefinitely, whether by deliberate intent or inability to create and maintain conditions favourable to their development, it is inconceivable that the nations which alone wield the power to utilise them should sit still and wait for something to turn up. To do so would be to be forgetful alike of their high ethical mission and their extensive economic interests.

In the meanwhile, the argument proceeds, an example worth taking to heart has been given by Great Britain, whose policy whatever may be urged against it by strenuous competitors is admittedly far-seeing. At the present conjuncture when mineral oil fuel is taking the place of coal on land and sea and when according to trustworthy account all available petroleum in the United States will be exhausted within a relatively brief period at the current rate of consumption which exceeds production by more than fifty million barrels a year,[2] the Government of Great Britain is very properly—and, it is added, successfully—endeavouring to obtain control of the most abundant supplies on the globe. And on the outcome of this fraternal competition may depend the rôles which each of these kindred peoples will play in the further material development of the race. The force of this appeal to Britain's example was somewhat impaired by a number of assertions which turned out on inquiry to be false. Secretary Fall alleged, for example, that King George's Government controlled one of the principal oil companies operating in Mexico and he received in dignified immobility and silence the courteous and emphatic contradiction which was issued by Great Britain.

The history of progress throughout the globe, it is further urged, has been the story of the forcible seizure of the material means of advancement by those who could employ them to the best advantage against the will of the races which would have let them lie dormant. Although the methods employed in this struggle have been rough and blameworthy the lofty principle underlying them has never been repudiated. It is an instinct rather than a principle and it is at the bottom of the revised version of the Monroe Doctrine. It inspired English-speaking Americans in their attitude towards the Colonial strivings of European Powers; it engendered the long-visioned policy of Great Britain, and now furnishes Japan with a telling argument in favour of her mission in the Far East. And, spirited politicians hold, no flimsy altruistic theories should blind the United States to the advantage of applying that principle to its own pressing wants. The backward peoples who happen to reside in a country which contains the necessaries or the luxuries of the chosen races who form the vanguard of civilisation must no longer be permitted to render them inaccessible. Progress requires the distribution of labour and opportunity among all classes, individuals, nations and races according to their qualifications and the imposition of the rough work upon those inferior races and individuals who are fitted for no other. In the international domain the first step in this direction is the recognition of the hallowed custom of compelling backward peoples to allow the qualified pioneers access to their natural wealth and to adopt or accept such a code of laws as may appear to the latter conducive to their humanitarian ends.

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[2] Statement issued by R. L. Welsh, General Counsel for the American Petroleum Institute. Cf. Los Angeles *Evening Express,* 23rd April, 1920.

Those are the premises from which the trend of the present political current may fairly be deduced. Gauging the aptitudes and aspirations of the Mexican population by these lofty standards, North American politicians affirm that they have been weighed carefully and found wanting. The two-fold root of Mexico's troubles, internal and external, ever since her independence, has been a complete lack of politico-social cohesiveness together with that deep distrust of strangers which characterises the various elements of her population. The former defect has proved an active bar to the establishment of a settled and rational type of government and unless it be speedily displaced will bring about the extinction of Mexico's independence; while the latter is answerable for the long sequence of misunderstandings, serious troubles and sinister quarrels which have marked the Republic's intercourse with foreign States. The country has always needed human leaven from abroad. It is the very breath of its economic existence. And yet throughout its history the foreigner has seldom been treated fairly and never consistently.

That whole train of reasoning when scrutinised in the dry light of experience will be found to be little more than a strong scaffolding behind which a structure is being raised without any of the ideal features of which it is so suggestive. There will always be differences in degree and in form among the viable types of civilisation, however marked the tendency may become to substitute uniformity for variety. And whatever may be thought of the innate qualities of the Mexican peoples which, like the Russian, are still in flux, it will not be gainsaid by those who know them best that some of the innate elements of their mind and character, their hereditary faculties and aptitudes bid fair under adequate educational training and higher social bonds to harmonise with what is best in the economic, political and spiritual conditions of the new era. They nearly all display a highly developed sense of the spiritual which often fringes upon mysticism, are marked by that attractive note of meditation and introspection which in the more cultural among them generates enthusiasm and inspires heroic self-sacrifice. It is only fair to add, however, that these remarks should not be qualified with the limitation that generalisations on matters Mexican are well nigh always conducive to error. Another of their noteworthy traits is their power of assimilation. Gradually the foreign races are becoming merged with the Indians and the blend is said to be excellent.

It should further be borne in mind that those who put forward the plea of the primacy of the needs of mankind over the rights of the lesser peoples, especially when the latter follow a dog-in-the-manger policy, are arguing on false assumptions. They have not been forbidden to develop the resources of the country. On the contrary, they have been and are being encouraged to go on with the work. All that the present Mexican Government is striving for is that the stream of riches which from the outset has been continuously flowing away from the country should be allowed to reach and benefit those who own it. As the President forcibly put the matter in his telegram to the *New York World*: "Mexico has well been called the treasure house of the world. In our mountains, plains and valleys there is incalculable wealth. Given scientific methods in agriculture and in irrigation, and our arable acreage will be able to sustain a population of 100,000,000. We have iron, coal and water power sufficient to turn the wheels of the world. Our oil fields give promise of producing a billion barrels annually and our great stretches of pine and hardwoods are virtually untouched.

"The same condition obtains with respect to metals. As for gold and silver there is no exact record of the millions sent annually to Spain during the three hundred years of viceregal rule. In the last twenty years, however, even with revolutionary disturbances, our mines have produced more than a billion dollars in net value.

"Consider these facts and then consider the horror of poverty in which ninety per cent of the Mexican people have lived, a people endowed by nature with every blessing necessary to comfort and happiness, yet compelled to suffer and die from sheer lack of the necessities of life. Common humanity dictated a change, and it is this change that Mexico has made. We stand to-day on the principle that the natural resources of a nation belong to the nation. Never again will the people of Mexico tolerate a Government that does not support this principle. By no means does this imply a hermit nation policy. Mexico is not so foolish as to think that she can live alone or work alone, nor is any such wish in her heart; but what Mexico will ask in the future is a fair partnership in development. We are through forever with the policy of gift, graft and surrender."[3]

It is not denied that serious encroachments upon life and property were among the phenomena that characterised the various revolutions or that crime and vice were rampant during that long drawn out period of wild orgies. But such compensation as is possible for reparable losses is being provided for, abuses are being remedied, and guarantees given for the future. The internal Mexican situation has therefore changed radically. The militant attitude of the foreign groups has remained without modification. It is also an unquestioned fact that the oil companies in especial which are now clamouring for drastic pressure to be put upon Mexico contrived to carry on their work during the darkest days of the Revolution. The talk about the needs of humanity, the white man's burden and the sacred duty of the more advanced nation to act as the keeper and mentor of the more backward is one of the least respectable survivals of the world war when clap-trap of the most specious kind usurped the functions of sound common sense and fiction was substituted for fact. Cuba which went through the mill which is now being prepared for Mexico became materially prosperous under the tutelage of the United States but for the time being lost her national soul.

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[3] Cf. *New York World* of June 27th, 1921. Telegram sent by President of Mexico.

CHAPTER VIII

The Foreign Pioneer

Mexico is a microcosm—an epitome of the planet. It contains mountains and valleys, lakes and plains, a vast coast line and extensive deserts, rich mines, oil wells, coal measures, agricultural and grazing soil, tropical lands, temperate zones, snowbound hills, volcanoes and hot medicinal springs. In a word, in order to become the most thriving country on the Western Continent it needs only money to provide water and communications. Meanwhile the lack of these entails economic misery and political disintegration. There is money in abundance but in virtue of an oversight of the legislator it is earmarked for the wealthy foreigner. In vast stretches of territory a sufficiency of moisture, whether from rainfall or artificial irrigation, would make all the difference to the inhabitants between downright poverty and material well-being. And as the rainfall is too meagre or too violent and irrigation has not yet taken its place, poverty and all that that implies have for generations been the lot of the people. This is especially true of some of the northern States in which thousands of square miles of potentially fertile soil produce nothing for lack of water. The State of Chihuahua, for example, which is far greater in area than Holland and Belgium has, we are assured by statisticians, only some sixty-five thousand hectares of land under cultivation, and most of this would have been as it was a few years ago—a barren steppe—were it not for the skill and labour and capital of the pushing outlander. In the great State of Sonora where most of the soil differs in no essential respects from that of Southern California, hardly five per cent of it is under cultivation. And yet it shows the same characteristics and the same potentialities as that for the growing of fruit and the production of cereal and leguminous food stuffs. It is only the stamina of the men who inhabit the respective countries—one set well fed, well housed and well paid; and the other hungry, ignorant and diseased—that makes the difference. And it can be unmade only by remedial measures against which the outlander has set his face. Like the mines, the coal measures and the oil wells, such lands are Nature's promises which the hand of man alone can redeem.

Irrigation, although by far the most urgent need of the population in those arid territories of the North, is by no means their only requisite for self-support. Ways of communication are another. Lack of waterways and roads has from time immemorial formed the crux of the economic, political and cultural plight of Mexico. If the sense of national unity is weaker than it should be in that Republic to-day, one of the causes lies largely in the circumstance that owing to the impossibility of communications, the various ethnic elements held only rare and fitful intercourse with each other. A similar condition of things cut up the kindred branches of the ancient Hellenic race into isolated regions. In spite of the fact that Mexico in 1910 possessed a larger number of railways and a greater mileage than any other Latin-American State, her people have sometimes to quit the Republic altogether and travel thousands of miles through foreign lands in order to reach some remote town or district in their native country.

For ages this inaccessibility of one part of Mexico to the inhabitants of another part kept the various sections of the population effectually isolated, hindering the fusion of races, the elimination of the less cultivated languages, the extinction of dialects and the growth of a strong national spirit. It compelled a considerable percentage of the people to support life on serpents, bugs, worms, lizards, locusts, slimy insects and kindred loathsome things while others were well provided with corn, beans, bananas and fish. Relative plenty in one place was attended by waste, while scarcity in another caused famine, disease and death. And to-day it is computed that agricultural produce grown thirty miles from the railroad is not marketable. Rail and carriage roads constitute, therefore, the complement of irrigation, the one being only partly effective without the other. And both necessitate more capital and skill than the Mexican people with hardly any millionaires among them could provide. For the country is such that roads there unless constructed with the solidity of European and North American engineering are likely to be washed out by frequent destructive floods while bridges must be uncommonly well made to keep them from being bodily swept away in like catastrophic fashion.

When the foreign yoke was first shaken off by a band of half-breeds, Mexicans of Spanish stock and friendly Indians, there were no foreigners but Spaniards in the country. And these—their number is variously computed at from five to seven thousand—had displayed as little initiative as the Indians in developing the mineral and agricultural riches of the country. For centuries they had had unmatched opportunities which they employed only to plunder the natural resources to the full extent of the technical appliances of the day. For the behoof of the common people they did little but build churches. For three hundred years after the Spanish Conquest no subjects of any European State except the Spaniards—and even of these very few—were admitted into the land. Two years after the attainment of independence a law was passed by which the State protection of non-Mexicans was restricted to those who professed Catholicism, which was still the only recognized religion of the Empire.

In the very same year[1] that this inhospitable law was enacted another bill of a different kind was passed. The imperial Government recognising the inability of the natives to acquit themselves of the various duties of progressive peoples without help from outside, decided to invite immigration from abroad. The objects were to develop the dormant resources of the country, awaken confidence, obtain loans and equip the Republic for a worthy place among the nations of the earth. By this decree lands were offered to immigrants, who were dispensed from paying taxes for a period of six years and from paying duties upon agricultural implements and other

[1] 1823.

foreign merchandise up to two thousand dollars. One can imagine the feelings of the English-speaking Protestant, Baptist, Methodist and other non-Catholic new-comers on learning that the Government which thus bestowed on them large tracts of land situated hard by unruly Indian tribes and held out to them various other inducements to settle there, must conscientiously decline to protect their lives or property. It is fair to add that neither that Government nor those which succeeded it for a quarter of a century or more sincerely desired to see an influx of non-Catholic foreigners into the country.

Thus nearly every new Administration realising the need of an energising spirit, incarnate in foreign settlers, inaugurated its career by making a bid for enterprising capitalists, thrifty farmers, skilled technicians and generally immigrants possessed of the material wealth, moral fibre and business enterprise in which the population of Mexico was deficient. But owing to the distrust which the native almost everywhere in the world displays towards foreigners, every inducement offered was bracketed with a deterrent. Thus under the Empire, sturdy farmers like the English, the Scotch, the Dutch were warned away if their theological beliefs happened to differ from those of the Vatican, and when the Empire made room for a Republic, the legislature invested the Executive with power to adopt "precautionary measures for the security of the Confederation" against foreign immigrants.

In sooth the Mexican administration has never until quite recently been quite at ease when dealing with settlers from abroad. If these were pushing, eager for innovation and impatient of time-killing formalism, they were set down as politically dangerous. If they were weak and lazy, as were some of the settlers of Latin race, they became a burden to the Treasury. If their faith was heretical, they were an abomination to such governments as that of Iturbide. If it was orthodox, they were odious to the Revolutionists and Constitutionalists of a later date. In a word, the foreigner might be likened to the travellers captured by the brigand Procrustes of ancient Greek fame who never by any chance fitted the couch prepared for them and had to be adjusted by their host to the dimensions of the ever-ready grave.

The pages of the Statute Book abound in enactments which convey a fair idea of the fluctuating status of foreigners in Mexico. Hardly was the country an independent community when a law was passed forbidding them to purchase land without a special authorisation from the State legislature or the Federal Congress, whereas other countries—with a few exceptions such as that of pre-war Finland—dispensed with such restrictions. A few years after the declaration of independence a clause was introduced into the Constitution prohibiting the purchase of land by any outlander unless he first became naturalised.

Porfirio Diaz' advent to power constituted a land-mark in the history of Mexico's attitude towards immigration. Encouragement to foreigners was the corner stone of his policy. They became a privileged order in the State. They revere his memory accordingly and still wistfully yearn for a return of the paradise lost. Mexican historians affirm, on the other hand, that if Diaz transformed the Republic into a paradise for those outlanders who were building up the finances of the nation, he made it a hell or at any rate a purgatory for the native who was expected to bear and forbear and was shot down or banished if he displayed the slightest symptom of active discontent. It is alleged by that President's admirers that this severity was a political necessity. If so, it was unfortunate not merely for the victims but also for the country and for the Dictator's reputation. He has, it is true, been apotheosised by the grateful foreign element to whose dancing he accommodated his music. They belaud him for having preserved exemplary order in the Republic. But his own countrymen anathematise him because, according to them, the only order preserved was purely mechanical depending upon downright coercion while the principal object for which he established it was undisturbed tenure of power for himself and his friends. At all events the natives whenever they were, or were suspected of being, unruly or restless received short shrift, the innocent being mowed down together with the so-called guilty, while the fortune-hunter from abroad was a superior being in whose favour the laws were stretched or violated to suit his needs or his convenience. Indeed if Mexican history is to be trusted, some of these protegés of Diaz resembled that pious member of the upper class who once asked: "Why ever did God give bones to the fishes, seeing that we, his favoured creatures, cannot eat them?"

The unbiased historian is thus forced to the conclusion that until General Obregón became President none of the governments that had theretofore watched over the destinies of Mexico contrived to strike the happy medium between the two extremes represented by Don Porfirio and Don Venustiano respectively. The former neglected or sacrificed his people for the sake of the foreign element, whereas the latter sometimes denied common justice to that foreign element in the name of his fellow-countrymen but without benefiting these. Both Presidents exhibited courage in working out their respective policies to the consequences of which they ultimately succumbed, both régimes dying of political apoplexy. But still greater courage is required by him who would assume the prosaic and commonplace function of meting out simple justice to each of the elements, native and foreign, and brave the resentment of each. And that is the attitude of General Obregón.

To scrutinise the ordering established by former Presidents, therefore, in the hope of finding examples of statecraft there, would be like going to a member of Diaz' rural police for a description of the beauties of the Mexican landscape.

The foreign element which has experienced such varied treatment still forms the abiding feature of international interest in current Mexican history. Indeed the future of the Republic is so closely bound up with the aspirations and strivings of those professional wealth-creators and their respective governments that the two have become well nigh indissoluble. They resemble the famous wooden horse introduced into beleaguered Troy by the wily Greeks as a boon and a talisman but which was filled with armed enemies of the doomed city.

It cannot be too often repeated that the benefits which

Mexico has received for those adventurous fortune-seekers are valuable and perhaps imperfectly appreciated by the country of their temporary adoption. It was their labour that drained swamps, reclaimed vast stretches of desert and imparted to them the agricultural value which they possess to-day. As Holland may be said to have been recovered and preserved from the sea by the exertions of her hardy sons, so a certain section of Mexico has been snatched from the swamp and the wilderness by groups of foreign pioneers who drained this region and provided that one with water by constructing dams, culverts and canals. These benefactors were not the natives. The Mexicans and their governments have accomplished hardly anything in this direction, have in fact undertaken little or nothing for lack of money or initiative. During the revolutionary epoch they even squandered considerable sums in flashy enterprises, pulling down what others had built up, and grudged the requisite funds for the redeeming of arid land. There are laurels to be culled on a field of battle which never grow in fields of rice, cotton or sugar cane. And several of the men who formerly rough-hewed the destinies of the nation were ambitious to figure in the limelight of a national theatre. They hungered after plaudits and triumphs or power or pelf. The prospect of unostentatiously benefiting the bulk of their fellow-countrymen without having their services blazoned abroad had no attraction for them.

To English-speaking pioneers, therefore, Mexico owes much of what has been achieved for her in the way of land-reclamation. These men staked their money, devoted their time, applied their skill and labour to this task of making part of God's earth better than they found it, and while enriching themselves benefited their fellow-men. Their qualifications were enterprise, capacity for hard work, perseverance and thrift. Their incentive was not a State subsidy, not a bribe in any shape or form, but a desire to receive a large return for their labour, and to some extent also the instinct of their race to behave like the steward in the Gospel story and, instead of burying the talent confided to them, to augment it and leave themselves and others the better for the trust. Beyond these conscious motives and semi-conscious instincts there was seldom any stimulus and hardly ever an unworthy one. And General Obregón has always been ready and eager to acknowledge the debt of gratitude which his country owes to these *individual* pioneers and to encourage their enterprise by every legitimate means. But wealthy companies and powerful associations belong to a different category and some of them have lived up to the proverbial description that they have no conscience to be scared, no soul to be saved and no body to be whipped.

Take the oil wells, for example. Mexicans argue that when the credit account of the American oil companies has been made up to the last item and all the benefits accruing to the nation from their activities have been duly recorded, the master fact remains that they entered the Republic solely to make colossal fortunes and without the faintest trace of altruistic motive. This is not a reproach but merely a circumstance which deprives them of the benefit of their plea of altruism. And to these colossal fortunes there are no bounds except those which Nature set to Mexico's resources. The appetite grows on what it consumes. They want all that can be extracted from the country—Mexicans allege—and hold that they are therefore entitled to protest against the laws, object to the Constitution, veto official acts of the Executive and aid and abet disaffected natives who are plotting against the Government. Does this attitude, do the riches which they have speedily acquired, it is asked, entitle them to such influence over the internal ordering of the Republic as no Mexican citizen ever wields? How little thought these corporations take of the lot of the natives may be gathered from their wistful yearning to see embodied anew in a government after their own liking the odious maxims of the Diaz régime under which the native population was treated as manure for the growth of foreign culture and prosperity.

Thus the dispute between the foreigner and the native resolves itself into the contention of the former that he enjoys an indefeasible right—which he is warranted in enforcing—not merely to exploit the mineral wealth of Mexico but also to establish there all the conditions which he deems necessary to the successful pursuit of this legitimate object. Hence the legislation of the country must be accommodated to that and a mechanism devised by which the Government which represents the principal foreign elements shall be at once the judge and the executor of the appropriate measures. Hence the demand, not yet hall-marked by the State Department in Washington but voiced by influential politicians and strenuously advocated by the Association for the Protection of American Rights in Mexico and the American Association of Mexico, that the Constitution of 1917 be repealed and a treaty concluded with the United States which will confer upon that country the rights and privileges of guardianship and bestow upon Mexico all the boons and blessings at present enjoyed by Cuba.

CHAPTER IX

THE OUTLANDER AND THE MEXICAN

IT HAS frequently been complained that the foreign capitalist in Mexico never gets credit for altruism and seldom for fairness. That grounds have occasionally been given for these allegations it would be idle to deny. In Mexico, as in most European countries, the foreigner is often regarded with distrust not so much by the common people as by the educated classes who are acquainted with the history of their country and of its relations with its great northern neighbour. They have not forgotten that some years ago the Republic extended its power over more than twice the territory which it occupies to-day, nor the circumstances in which it lost the larger half of its possessions to the United States. Neither are they ignorant of the desire of an influential party in that Republic at present to obtain possession of Lower California—by purchase if possible, but by hook or by crook. Those among thinking Mexicans who are given to reading remember the significant words of that straightforward, upright American sociologist who wrote: "We have inherited our full share of the appetite which I have called political earth-hunger. *Internal troubles and the time required to digest the last meal have allayed it for a period, but it will awaken again.*"[1] And many fear that the question of the sources of the Colorado River and Lower California are already whetting it.

It is not the people of the United States who are to be blamed for such machinations. The bulk of the nation has never been a party to them, has in fact sincerely and vainly deprecated them. But one of the political characteristics of the people is their readiness at all times to rally round their Government, whatever its party-colour, and however profoundly it may dissent from a given policy. What the Mexicans consequently behold is a great nation which contrives to win a reputation for disinterestedness, nay for altruism, yet goes on preserving that good name in the world while reprehensible manœuvres are being carried out by its chosen representatives or by a clique which influences these, for the purpose of dispossessing weak neighbours of their territory or depriving them of their sovereignty. That these wily tactics should be undertaken by imperialistic States which make no claim to "righteousness" and are ready to plead necessity's immunity from law, is natural and carries with it such compensation as the moral reprobation of right minded people confers. But when those unjustifiable acts are labelled "amity," "humanitarianism," "moral guidance," the nation that suffers thereby is stung to the quick. Resentment in such cases is as inevitable as a manifestation of the law of gravity, and distrust is an instinctive impulse. The thief, Mexicans say, is not he who steals well but he who keeps the stolen property and his good name to boot.

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[1] *Earth-Hunger and Other Essays,* by W. G. Sumner. Yale University Press, 1914. P. 51. The italics are mine.

The plodding, self-reliant, English-speaking wrestlers with the brute forces of Nature whose life-purpose is an unending struggle have little in common with the expansive, explosive, simple-minded and generous people in whose midst they live and labour. Their standards of progress, their social concepts, their outlook upon life are widely different. We behold on the one side practical sense, stubborn will-power, dogged tenacity, indomitable courage, while on the other we discern specious theories and distracted misgivings, an innate bent towards unfruitful discussion and a frequent short-circuit between saying and doing. The one set of men are able and willing to grapple with undertakings which the other can conclusively prove to be impossible—until they are achieved. The former can boldly set to work at a task with seemingly little hope of accomplishing it and go on with it perseveringly without even the encouragement of partial success. The latter are wanting alike in initiative and constancy, are hampered by a feminine solicitude about the prospects and by an imagination so lively, nimble and Protean that it assumes the shape of well nigh everything that affects it. Hence their courage rises and falls in sympathy with external forces, and although they are brilliant and generous and courageous to a heroic degree, their energy can seldom be calculated with certainty or employed with method. In a journey of, say, a hundred miles the most difficult laps for the average Mexican are the beginning and the end, and when he has covered ninety miles he is still but half-way through.

From the ingrained incapacity of the two races to understand each other flows much of the bitterness which renders fruitful co-operation between them, except on terms of rank inequality, impracticable. And to that cause may be traced the inability of the English-speaking foreigner to fathom what is meant by national dignity in connection with the demand for a treaty before recognition, and the incapacity of the Mexican to realise the trend of the cosmic currents of the new era. And yet the matter is really simple.

The Mexican's distrust of foreigners, deep-rooted in recent history, still receives pabulum from many of the foreigners themselves who display a contemptuous disregard for the forms of intercourse prevalent in the country. They come unprovided with the small change of social life which enables individuals to meet and converse on neutral ground and exchange courtesies which although void of reality are helpful as a bridge to friendship or to good fellowship. It may be objected that the forms in use are exaggerated and meaningless and that the serious man of business cannot afford to devote part of his precious time to complying with them. But experience has disposed of the objection without altering the procedure of the strangers. It has shown that great issues are sometimes dependent on small matters of form. A frail thread for his hand, of no value as a support, is enough to enable many a man to cross a narrow bridge over a precipice who would not attempt the feat if this inadequate but important aid were lacking. The weakest of withes will bind great bundles of wood.

The American residents in Mexico are admittedly the principal trespassers against the social enclosures of the Mexican people. They seldom have an inkling of the mental mechanism of the Spaniard or the Indian, nor do they care what impression their own brusque behaviour produces. The capitalist, in particular, relies entirely upon the irresistible power of gold; the aggrieved commoner upon the force of his arguments to move his hearers and win their support. Upon the personal factor they hardly ever lay stress. Nay, they frequently scoff at it. Americans who are nothing if not realists trust entirely to the legitimacy of their business, to its alleged beneficial results for the Mexican people, and care nothing for the "silly scraping and bowing and complimenting" which goes on sempiternally among the natives who, like the Spaniards, are sticklers for form.

It is pathetic to watch the coming together of the average representatives of two races and to note how their best interests are often permanently damaged by the veriest trifles which the one regards as essential and the other scouts as ridiculous. The foreign pioneer of the highest type is a diamond in the rough who for lack of polish is not recognised for what he is—a fine, honest, clean man who works hard, lives thriftily, wishes well to all men and asks for no privileges. He appears in his shirt sleeves, possibly spits on the floor, employs an obnoxious nickname to designate the Mexican, claps him on the back after a few minutes' acquaintance and is at no pains to learn his "lingo." In a word, he brings his country and often his village with him, unwittingly treats the natives as intruders and deems himself to be the mountain to which Mohammed himself must pilgrimage.

The two types move on different planes. Race divergencies, national traditions and diversity of aims have been suggested as the explanation. And it is true that the Americanised "Anglo-Saxon" and the Latinised Indian personify, not as is commonly assumed, two epochs of one and the same civilisation but two wholly distinct cultural ideals and tendencies—artificially dwarfed in the one and highly developed in the other but none the less specifically different. This assertion may smack of political heresy but time will show how close it is to the reality. For one thing, the man of English speech, particularly on the Western shore of the Atlantic, is more responsive to the pressure of material needs, more solicitous about economics, more intent upon conquering the forces of Nature than the highest type of Latinised American, who takes after the Celt and the Slav. But the root of the matter lies in the circumstance that the English speaking resident, however low the rung of the social ladder on which he himself may stand, looks down upon the native as upon an inferior who is disqualified to ascend it. The consciousness of this inequality is ever present to the man of English speech who lacks the social charm, the exquisite politeness, which among all Latinised Americans are indispensable passports to fruitful co-operation. "How many bitternesses," wrote the famous French statesman Turgot, "have their origin in a word, in forgetfulness of some slight observances. . . . How many persons of understanding have we taken for fools?"

A concrete instance which occurred during my stay in Mexico City of the way in which the wealth-creating foreigner wounds the sensitiveness of the Mexican without being conscious of violating any social propriety, is perhaps worth recording. In October, 1920, two Houston excursionists were standing in the lobby of one of the principal banks of the capital when turning to a Mexican gentleman they inquired where they could quench their thirst. The person addressed is a well-known citizen who occupies an exceptionally high position in the Republic. With the unfailing hospitality which characterises his countrymen he invited the strangers to accompany him and he duly offered them the beverages which they desired. Hardly had they emptied their glasses when they turned on their heels exclaiming—"Well, we must go now." The words "many thanks" were uttered not by the guests but by the host who had entertained them.

The "typical Mexican" created by foreign caricaturists and cinematographists—the boisterous braggadocio who cuts the throats of the unarmed and takes to his heels when he scents danger even from afar—is a factitious monster nowhere to be encountered in the Republic. Human life is relatively cheap in Mexico and the individual lays it down without many regrets. His physical endurance too outbids that of any European. And yet it is hard to convince the highly cultured foreigner that the current notions on the subject are saturated with fable and absurdity. In this connection and also incidentally as a sample of the bitter spirit engendered by newspaper lampoons, it may serve a useful purpose to reproduce a few remarks on this topic lately published by one of the foremost periodicals of Mexico.[2] They were evoked by the despatch of the American warships to Tampico and by the conditions there established for the genesis of a grave international incident such as interventionists were eagerly anticipating and prematurely discounting.

"One day," writes this publicist, "a sensational episode sent a thrill to the hearts of the population of the entire American Continent. Mr. Wilson, then President of the United States, had sent warships to Mexican waters for the protection of American citizens. And a boat belonging to one of the cruisers and manned by thirteen marines went up the river beyond the town of Tampico and was there fallen upon by rebels. The assailants not merely stripped the vessel of everything it contained but took even the boots of the sailors.

" 'The attacking party must have been strong numerically,' I thought, the moment I learned of the occurrence, thus to have despoiled of their belongings thirteen marines whom one must picture to oneself as thirteen veritable athletes. And viewed in this light the incident was invested with real importance, one might even say with an alarming character, although of course this would ultimately depend upon the mood of Mr. Wilson.

"But shortly afterwards the official report drawn up by the Admiral in command of those vessels came in and one gathered from that considerate document that the formidable body of assailants consisted of three wretched lack-alls of whom only two carried arms and one of these withdrew almost at once, according to the Admiral's account.

"Thus it turned out that the redoubtable posse of marauders was composed of two men, one of them provided with a weapon, the other unarmed, so that if we can imagine one of the thirteen burly marines taking charge of the defenceless bandit, there remained but one armed highwayman confronting the other twelve towers of strength.

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[2] Señor Querido Moheno in *El Universal* of Mexico.

"On the river Tamesi then, on board of that boat the amusing story was rehearsed of those forty Galicians who let themselves be robbed on the highroad because they were travelling 'absolutely alone.' In like manner those twelve marines found themselves absolutely 'alone' face to face with a terrible Mexican bandit and as a matter of course there was nothing else for them to do but to allow themselves to be plundered without resistance.

"Or take the punitive expedition headed by General Pershing which cost the United States Treasury the trifle of one hundred and fifty million dollars. It consisted of twelve thousand men of four different kinds of arms, including aeroplanes, and was rigged out for the purpose of capturing Villa 'living or dead.' Well, when the General returned home (without Villa) the moving-picture shows of the United States presented night after night the portrait of Pershing with this pompous inscription: 'The Pacifier of Mexico.'

"Now if in the name of common sense one were to explain to these good people (of the United States) that incidents of this nature can take place only on the screen; if by quoting accounts of their own press one were to prove to them that among our many national defects that of cowardice cannot be assigned the smallest place. . . .; if one were to make it clear to them by abundant statistics that in our country human life is squandered with the utmost offhandedness, by reason of the few attractions it offers; if, after all this, one were to unfold to them on the screen a moving picture of those twelve sturdy sinewy marines letting themselves be robbed by a sickly destitute tramp, and after that, if one were to bring home to them the fact that in Mexico, in any and every social layer, twelve men, whatsoever their condition might be, would stand and defend themselves were it only by using their teeth, against a solitary armed assailant. . . . we should feel profoundly struck to see their expressionless faces unmoved by the recital while their blue child-like eyes were devoid of the faintest ray of light to suggest that they discerned the point."[3]

That the English-speaking foreigner regards the Mexican as an inferior type of human it would be idle to gainsay. His every act, his every ejaculation, betrays the feeling which occasional honeyed words can neither hide nor neutralise. Those tributes of praise which he airily tosses to his Mexican friends from time to time have no more practical significance than the yearly washing of beggars' feet by the Catholic monarchs of Italy and Spain. When the Mexican talks of national dignity the average Yankee sets him down as a mendacious "grafter" for whom patriotism is, what Dr. Johnson described it as being, the last refuge of blackguards. The ordinary American, in turn, is to the educated Mexican a righteous Puritan in seeming and a hard-fisted egotist in acting, whose philanthropy is not to be distinguished from the most sordid self-interest. But even conventional truth habitually lies somewhere between two extremes where most people are averse to seeking it. Many foreigners in Mexico flatter themselves that they know the natives thoroughly because they had the luck to be present at a revolt, an onslaught of brigands or a murder which resembles the familiar domestic lynching. But the roots of racial character lie elsewhere. In the course of my travels I have observed that when enumerating the selfish or domineering nations each nation is apt to make the excusable mistake of reckoning one too few. And to some extent it is the same when the classification turns upon inferior peoples and races. That, however, is a failing common to individuals and nations alike.

The typical outlander immigrates to Mexico in order to make money and return home as soon as possible to a comfortable life in his native land. He seldom knows anything about the Spanish language and hardly ever masters its grammar. The German is an exception. Before he starts for the Republic he endeavours to learn Spanish and what is more he acquaints himself with the outlines of Mexican history and with the customs of the people to which he unhesitatingly conforms. And his success in establishing good neighbourly relations with the natives of his adopted country is in proportion to these exertions.

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[3] *El Universal,* 8th July, 1921.

How far apart from each other the native and the English-speaking foreigner really are may be gauged from a few words which once passed between two of their representatives. The Mexican being asked why his countrymen are looked down upon by the outlanders as the inferiors of these, replied—"Because of our childish illusions." "Illusions?" "Yes. We suffer from many. For example we nearly all flatter ourselves that we are at home in Mexico and owe no apologies to any one for having been born there. Yet the attitude of foreign residents among us proves that that is a silly mistake. Another of our self-deceptions derives from our habit of inferring the motives of our foreign guests from their behaviour which bespeaks selfish interests whereas we fail to pay due heed to their professions which go to show that the mainspring of their actions is pure philanthropy. But judicious propaganda is correcting these errors."

In daily converse the English-speaking resident shows that he is separated from the Mexican by an abyss and he seldom seeks to bridge it over. The native population of Mexico, whatever one may think of its mental and moral equipment—and this is lamentably defective—undoubtedly possesses latent capacities which it would pay the country to cultivate and develop. After centuries of oppression, misery and forced ignorance to-day it is naturally at its worst. The mental and moral energies of the people, like the natural resources of the country, have been systematically wasted for ages. And a protracted civil war has put the finishing stroke to the work of demoralisation. And yet despite these tremendous handicaps the bulk of the Mexican people is socially lovable, intelligent, mobile, truthful, honest and hospitable. The foreigners who fled the country during the revolutionary outburst and left their property to the care of the common Mexican peasant pay the highest tributes to his loyalty, courage and honesty. Many interesting stories are told of his devotion. The following incident is of more recent date: President Obregón issued a decree prohibiting the circulation of foreign moneys in the Republic, whereupon vast cases filled with American coins and paper were transported to the United States. And the representatives of the Company charged with the operation are reported to have said that so long as they were on Mexican soil they had no misgivings about the safety of their precious cargo, but that once they had crossed the border and entered the United States they were in a continuous tremor lest it be wrested from them.

Systematic efforts are being made by President Obregón and Señor Vasconcellos, the Rector of the University, to proceed to the education of the masses. And it would be an unpardonable crime for any foreign State to baulk these beginnings and turn the plastic elements of the Republic into human dynamite which is so apt to explode and would not only destroy their own political fabric but cause considerable damage to that of their neighbour. The endeavours of irresponsible agents to foster revolts and rebellions with a view to clinch the argument for the "cleaning up" process are therefore among the deadliest crimes against humanity.

It is a phenomenon well worth noting that despite the grinding conditions in which the people of Mexico have hitherto lived and worked, their inborn vitality is still exceptionally vigorous. The innate racial force which, together with other characteristic traits, differentiates most of them from the Indians of the United States, exhibits itself in the ease with which they assimilate foreign elements of Latin, Slav and Teuton extraction. Intermarriages between Spaniards, Portuguese, French, Italians, Slavs and Mexicans are fairly frequent and the blend is said to be excellent from all points of view. But with the peoples of English speech such unions are rare.

Without being gifted with special powers of observation, one may discern manifestations of a potent force of attraction —the attraction of material comfort—wielded by the American people over the Mexicans, especially in the border States. And considering the poverty, ignorance and general helplessness of the latter as compared with the training, the strivings and the high standard of living prevalent among the former, the process, which is gradually gaining in intensity, is what one would naturally expect. On the part of the Mexican it may be described as a legitimate desire to better his social standing at a cost which he is incapable of appreciating, and on the American side as the overwhelming influence of material well-being and an abiding sense of general superiority radiating to the uttermost limits of political consciousness.

In various parts of the Mexican Republic then, especially in the border States and Yucatan, a process is going forward to which one is tempted to give the name of denationalisation. For it is gradually wearing away by erosion not only the defects, but certain of the national characteristics almost before they have become definitely fixed. The economic ascendancy and cultural sway of the United States is a resultant of the enterprise, industry and pioneer spirit of the Anglo-Saxon on the one hand and of the quietistic dreaminess, fatalistic bent and centrifugal tendencies of the Latinised Indian on the other. And it bids fair under present conditions to penetrate in the fulness of time from Mexicali in the Northwest to San Cristobal in the Southeast before political unification can be completed. The operation of this tendency is noticeable to a greater or lesser degree in many States of the Mexican Union and in well-nigh every walk of life. The newspapers are passably faithful copies of the great dailies of New York in which one finds the same sensational headlines, articles begun on the first page and continued on the seventh or eleventh, the voluminous Sunday editions with comic and illustrated supplements—often literal translations from New York newspapers—and most of the other attributes of the newest phase of journalism. Their advertisements are Spanish reproductions of those flashy hypnotising announcements with which Chicago, New York and San Francisco are familiar. The phraseology is identical and superlatively un-Mexican. The universities too have been largely modelled on those of the United States.[4] But the children of wealthy

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[4] Under the present Rector, Don Jose Vasconcellos, a healthy reaction has begun.

Mexicans are being educated in North American schools and universities. Not only in frontier towns, but along the coastline, east and west, United States money has practically ousted the Mexican currency out of circulation, and in Lower California even the telegraph and post offices insist on payment being made in dollars.[5] The State of Sonora in the North and Northwest and that of Yucatan in the Southeast are yielding more readily than the others to these steady influences from the United States. Consequently the English language is making headway and Mexican servants capable of conversing in that tongue are to be had in the principal cities of the Republic. The vulgar fox-trot, cake-walk, one-step and tango have entirely supplanted the graceful Spanish jotas, sevillanas and other higher forms of terpsichorean diversion. Mexican and Spanish songs are being forgotten. The picturesque regional costumes are being discarded in favour of the graceless garb which denotes cultural progress. The tailors of New York and Boston create the fashion in men's costumes and hats. American dishes, canned peaches and pineapples, meats and fish find lucrative markets throughout the Republic. In a country which abounds in luscious fruits all the year round, the hotels serve only Californian or Florida peaches, pears, cherries, etc., imported in glasses or tins. North American mannerisms in speech are being translated into Spanish and are coming into vogue among the pushing semi-intellectuals. In a word, Yankee is trump.

The art of politics, as cultivated not in its heights, but in certain of its unsunned depths, was also imported, cut and dried, from the United States in the days when political morality in the great Republic was at a somewhat lower level than that to which it has since attained. And it still holds the field. The United States system of federation, suited at best to Anglo-Saxons and which men like George Washington and Alexander Hamilton deemed too democratic even for them, is the charter which was adopted by the Mexican liberators for their unsophisticated fellow countrymen. Porfirio Diaz rated it at its true value in private speech and public deed, as a serviceable instrument for politicians and lawyers to wrangle about, but hardly more. The part constantly played by many of the sovereign States of the Mexican Union has been disrupted. In a word, the inhabitants of the Southern Republic were thrown into a Medea's cauldron before being cast in a national mould. And if the influences to which they are subjected to-day—before they have become fully conscious as a nation—keep on operating at their present rate without any systematic national breakwater to withstand them, there can be no doubt that the Mexican people will emerge partially recreated in the image and likeness of their Americanised Anglo-Saxon model—a politico-cultural hybrid. It is merely a question of time, and that of a relatively brief span.

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[5] President Obregón has issued decrees dealing with this incongruity.

CHAPTER X

OIL AND WATER

THE capitalists and explorers who responded to Diaz' invitation were mostly men of the races whose enterprise, thoroughness and staying powers have carried the world to its present cultural level. But soon after the Dictator's disappearance from the scene "there arose up a new king over Mexico which knew not Joseph," whereupon the attitude of the authorities towards foreign companies underwent a marked and infelicitous change. They were occasionally mulcted and harried, a few of their contracts were questioned, others formally annulled, some of their servants were killed by bandits and others maltreated or threatened. For the misdeeds of criminals during a revolutionary welter it is not easy to fix moral responsibility upon any administration. Moreover Mexico, in spite of the loud outcry against her "savagery" which has been raised abroad, can point to a much less bloody record than either France or Russia. Foreigners in particular suffered less than elsewhere and much less than was apprehended at the outset. But by gathering together in one compact record all the crimes perpetrated in the name of liberty or order during ten years of civil strife, by branding every Mexican with the mark of the bandit, the cutthroat or the ravisher, by creating odious types, attaching to them the badge of infamy and holding them up to universal opprobrium in moving pictures, it became possible to discredit a whole people in the eyes of the world. And that, Mexicans complain, is what has been, and still is being, done by the plutocratic little oil State which operates within the great Democratic State to the north of the Rio Grande. But as Edmund Burke put it, one cannot frame an indictment against a whole nation.

Notwithstanding the fact that the revolutionary movement at its height was beyond the control of disciplined reason and political expediency, the foreign element as a whole occupied a more or less privileged position even then. And yet the attitude which it assumed, like that of the clergy, was distinctly antagonistic to every popular movement. Hostility to Madero, to the forces that attacked Victoriano Huerta, to Alvaro Obregón and to all democratic movements, whatever their origin or their object, invariably sought and found a rallying point in certain wealthy foreign residents. They upheld Diaz, they gave at least their "moral" support to immorality incarnate in Victoriano Huerta, they courted, encouraged and struck up agreements with "coming politicians" of whom they have always a few in waiting, and they maintained friendly intercourse with rebels throughout the country. It may seem as incredible as it was reprehensible, but it is said to be a demonstrable fact, which will subsequently appear evident to all, that this intercourse took on the character of—shall we call it moral guardianship?—and exposed the fair name of the people of the United States to aspersions merited only by certain of its servants. Even foreign diplomacy has been known to intervene unofficially and importunely on behalf of the discredited candidate of an anti-popular party and to have dangled before the eager eyes of the people's representatives the lure of quick recognition by a certain foreign power!

Now this aspect of current Mexican history is still a sealed book to those experts who claim to know the rights and wrongs of the subject and are looked up to for information and guidance by the statesmen of their respective countries. And yet it is a theme full of surprises. If a Mexican, spurred by motives analogous to those which stimulated Mr. Fall, endowed with that politician's perseverance and supplied with the requisite materials, were to set himself to compile a register of those breaches of hospitality—not to call them by a harsher name—he would shed a wholly new light upon Mexico's international relations and possibly contribute to modify the policy of the watching and waiting Powers who are fitfully groping their way in darkness.

In view of those and other provocations, it is well worth noting that during the period termed "confiscatory" by foreign interventionists the oil companies were doing a flourishing business. President Obregón himself has supplied the following figures, which make it clear that whoever else was feeling the heavy hand of misfortune, the foreign oil companies were thriving: "In the year 1917 the companies exported 42,545,853 barrels of oil; in 1918, 51,768,110; 1919, 77,703,289; 1920, 151,058,257; 1921, January to May inclusive, 76,493,564; probable production for 1921, 190,000,000 barrels.

"Does this steady increase indicate that the Mexican Government has been placing any obstacles in the way of development or that during the Great War it sought to hamper the United States by crippling oil export?"[1]

But the errors, prejudices and bad faith of one party to the present dispute should not be allowed to blind one to the blunders and shortcomings of the other. Nor would any survey of the origins of the present impassé, however summary, be complete without some account of the grievances of foreign investors. If moral responsibility for the acts of bandits and other criminals cannot be laid on the shoulders of either of the belligerents in a civil war, the functioning of judicial institutions in peace time undoubtedly concerns the constituted Government and forms an essential part of its responsibilities. And on this score one must admit that the complaints uttered against the Mexican tribunals are too often well founded. Neither the legal procedure nor the subsequent sanction attains or comes near to the standard accepted in English-speaking countries. Hence the rooted aversion displayed by so many, Mexicans and foreigners, to carry their claims into one of the law courts. There are instances not a few in which avoidable procrastination has defeated the ends of justice, and others in which a manifest—or what appeared to be a manifest—violation of rights was countenanced or winked at by the authorised administrators of the law. President Obregón has since devoted much time and study to this fundamental question, and among the first fruits of his investigation was a bill amend-ing and simplifying legal procedure. But as yet much remains to be done.

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[1] To the *New York World*, June 27th, 1921.

It may not be amiss to offer here a concrete case of real hardship which the present writer has taken the trouble to investigate on the spot. The details he took from the official records.

A few years ago the Yaqui Valley[2] consisted of arid land of which only 3,750 acres had been reclaimed. The rest was not cultivated for lack of water. An Anglo-American Company which has since become wholly American[3] entered into a contractual arrangement with the Mexican Government and without any subsidy or even land grant bound itself to construct at a cost of some twelve million dollars (U. S. currency) a system whereby permanent irrigation would be supplied not only to its own holdings but also to the entire area of the Yaqui Valley susceptible of irrigation—approximately 750,000 acres. The Company estimated that with a fair supply of water the district might be made to produce annually some twenty million dollars' worth of crops and live stock.

On the strength of this calculation those men of English speech went to work, staked their capital, devoted their time and applied their experience and skill to the realisation of this dream of betterment. The incentive was the innate pioneer impulse of the Aryan race coupled with the prospect of making their venture a financial and technical success. One of the first needs of the district was railway communication—and one of the first achievements of the Company was a transaction with the South Pacific Railway Co. which had for its effect the construction of a line from the port of Guaymas in an easterly direction through the Yaqui Valley, a distance of 154 miles, which in time will form an iron way of 800 miles down the West Coast, thus closing the present gap in railway communication along the Pacific seaboard from British Columbia to Central America.[4]

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[2] In the State of Sonora.

[3] La Compañia Constructora Richardson.

[4] To Guadalajara. The line covers already nearly 700 miles.

The Company also made and maintained 400 miles of roads with over 100 bridges and thus contributed materially to the breaking down of some of the natural partitions which tend to keep Mexican from Mexican and isolate the Republic from the outside world.

The material achievements just enumerated nowise exhausted the task on which these forerunners of the higher civilisation had embarked. Another was, as has been said, irrigation. Lack of water in season is one of the scourges of Mexico. If the country could reckon upon an adequate amount of rainfall at the right periods, it would be a veritable paradise, a granary of the human race. But dry farming under the actual climatic conditions of the Valley is in some cases a lottery which ruins him who buys a ticket and in other cases a sheer impossibility.

Over and above those contractual obligations the Company discharged functions of a most helpful kind which ought properly to have been fulfilled by a State institution. It surveyed the land most carefully, metre by metre, prepared tables classifying each kind of soil such as sandy loam, red loam, red clay, salt loam, etc., determined the exact area of each, listed the crops that will best grow on them in the order of their suitableness and calculated by actual experiment the number of irrigations requisite and the total volume of water that each crop would need on each variety of soil. Over and above all this, its officials gathered and classified a body of precious meteorological data for each day of the year, giving the state of the atmosphere, the temperature, the relative humidity, the velocity and direction of the wind, etc. In possession of these observations for a period of ten years, one can now foretell with such a degree of accuracy when a frost may occur that all danger of damage to the crops from this source has been practically eliminated.

In the eastern section of the Valley cultivation had already increased from 3,750 to 27,000 acres, and was proceeding apace when the depredations of the Yaqui Indians forced the Company to suspend work. During the ten years of Revolution it went on supplying water to all applicants and for a considerable time accepted payment therefor in worthless paper currency. It gave its workmen a wage varying from 50 to 75 cents (U. S. currency) a day. Those in truth were lean years.

For thirteen years it has never paid a dividend.

Those services were never properly appreciated by the local authorities. Not only was the Company denied protection against the Yaquis and bandits, but the duly established State government is affirmed to have endeavoured systematically by taxation to despoil them of the land which they owned. The rate of taxation had been fixed by contract for ten years, ending in September, 1919, but in 1916 this basis was rejected by the authorities as inadequate. As soon as a stretch of land became cultivable by irrigation, the Company sold it, as it was bound by contract to do. The result was that it never had more than a small percentage of soil capable of being tilled, the rest being grazing land. Yet the authorities insisted on taxing all its possessions as though they were all under cultivation, whereas only two per cent came under this head.

In the year 1916, it is further alleged, the Governor of Sonora raised the taxes thirty times more than the proper rate. The motive which he adduced was the advisability of splitting up large estates. The Company refused to pay this impost, whereupon the State Government proceeded to sell the property. Here, however, Mr. Lansing interposed a protest in the name of the United States Government, adding that the Company's position was "unassailable in law and in morals." None the less the contract was cancelled by a Mexican military decree, but the Company was not apprised of this arbitrary act which came to its knowledge quite casually when its representative was handing in the amount of the legal taxes due.

As the Revolution rendered the carrying out of the contract impossible, the Company petitioned that the term fixed be extended in consequence. For Yaquis were overrunning the district, bandits had killed the live stock, railway communications had ceased. But the Carranza Government turned a deaf ear to the request.[5] An appeal was thereupon made to the Federal District Court, but this tribunal declared itself incompetent, whereupon the Company inquired what tribunal was competent. But the question was never answered.

That is one instance of the reception accorded to foreign pioneers whose co-operation is one of Mexico's greatest assets. It afforded General Obregón, who sees things in correct perspective, an opportunity to show the stuff he is made of. He had no sooner acquainted himself with the preposterous increase of taxation and the consequences drawn from the Company's refusal to pay than he gave orders that the Company be dealt with as justice required. And it received satisfaction forthwith.

The oil companies profess to have a similar dirge to sing and they have chanted it in many keys. But between the two cases there is no parity. The discovery and exploitation of mineral oil in Mexico is from one angle of vision a romance fraught with interest as intense as that which is still aroused by the adventures and misdeeds of Cortes and Pizarro. The history of the origins of that branch of industry if written without bias or reticence by the right kind of chronicler—a man with a spark of genial fire—would yield a human document worthy to outlive most of the "immortal" works of the past hundred years. Like many other discoveries, that of oil in Mexico has brought worry and anxiety to the country that produced it. It may be compared to the gold of the Rhine, a blessing and a curse in one. Many a Mexican fervently wishes oil had never been deposited in his ill-fated fatherland or else that his country were situated on some other Continent; and many a Yankee regrets that the source of this precious liquid is not placed in some region where North Americans are better appreciated or more free to change the laws and constitution congruously with their interests.

One may readily trace the genesis of the waves of critical feeling in Mexico which for long have been angrily beating against the men who first unlocked the mineral treasure house, gave the precious oil to the world and claim to be regarded as benefactors of the race. Like Rhine-gold, oil is power—economical, political, social power—and the concentration of such power in the hands of a few citizens of a foreign Republic in whose national life the political spirit is as dominant as is greed of gold, fills with apprehension a community of people like the Mexicans who in politics are children almost devoid of social coherency and sadly deficient in the self-protecting faculty inherent in most political communities. This feeling is enhanced by the enormous importance attached by the American people and Government not only to the production of oil but to the establishment of such a system of governance in the country where it is found as will suit the varied requirements of those who exploit it. For this is the point on which the dispute between the two parties really hinges.

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[5] It is fair to note that the matter—like the anti-Japanese legislation in California—lay between the Company and the Sovereign State of Sonora and that the Federal courts in Mexico as in the United States are not competent to try such cases. To my thinking this is one of many arguments against the Federal State system in the Mexican Republic.

Mr. E. L. Doheny, an accepted authority in these matters, publicly announced some time ago that the oil supply from Mexico "has come to be regarded as a part of the available petroleum supply essential to meet the demands of our markets. . . . Consideration of this phase of the petroleum situation immediately raises the conjecture as to the probability of this reliance *being supported by a definitely declared policy on the part of our Government* to encourage and protect its citizens in the lawful acquisition and development in foreign countries of those essential raw products which include petroleum and many others well known to our men of industry." [6]

This statement is lucid, comprehensive and significant. "Without the continued importation to the United States of the production of the wells of American companies in Mexico," he goes on to say, "the Shipping Board might just as well plan to use coal on practically all of its fleet after April 1st next; many industries, including railroads of the South and factories of the East, may just as well look forward to reconverting their plants from the use of oil to the use of coal, and the cities of the East, including New York City, that are planning to use fuel oil in lieu of coal for heating purposes may just as well abandon the idea, because the supply of fuel oil for all these needs is not and will not be available from the production of United States oil fields. They are dependent upon uninterrupted supply from Mexico for the present and immediate future."[7]

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[6] Interview of E. L. Doheny, Esq., with press representative, Los Angeles, California, December 9th, 1919, p. 6. The italics are mine.

"The strained relations between the United States and Mexico can, I think, very well be classified as being of a threefold nature, all included under the expression, 'International Obligations.' "[8]

Mr. Doheny then goes on to say that the three points of difference between the two Governments are the failure of the Mexican Government (i.e., the Carranza administration) to protect Americans engaged in lawful and peaceful pursuits in the Republic, the failure of the Government to prevent the spread of bolshevism (!) from Mexico to the United States, and its repeated attempts to confiscate valuable properties rightfully acquired by Americans under Mexican law.

Since those significant utterances were penned Carranza and his régime have vanished from the scene and the new head of the Government is redressing grievances, correcting mistakes, returning property wrongfully sequestered and generally administering justice to all with a firm hand. And he is full of hope that all complainants and creditors will be content. This hope, however, is not shared by all his countrymen. What sceptical Mexicans are apprehensive of is lest the foreign elements should be carried by a strong impetus of right not merely to the point of its enforcement but by the *vis inertiae* far beyond that. Vaulting into the saddle they may alight on the other side and trespass on Mexico's reserved ground. . . . Asserting their rights they may demand privileges. Insisting on protection they may prescribe the kind of laws by which it should be secured and establish a precedent destructive of Mexican sovereignty. And their reading of recent

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[7] Ibidem, p. 7.
[8] Ibidem, p. 9.

American history appears to them to bear out this apprehension.

Well grounded or imaginary, this misgiving is a fact and therefore a force to be reckoned with, just as is the belief of many Americans that the Mexicans are incapable of any kind of self-government and therefore ripe for the status of wardship.

The main grievance of English-speaking oil magnates in Mexico turns upon Article 27 of the last Constitution.[9] In principle this enactment disqualifies foreigners collectively and individually from acquiring or holding mines, oil wells or land in the Republic unless they renounce in advance their right to appeal to their respective Governments against laws which they may deem unjust or vexatious. It also declares that all minerals—solids, liquid or gaseous—are vested in the nation and consequently that the rights of ownership hitherto conferred by purchase according to law will from the date of the promulgation of the Constitution cease to be attainable by natives or foreigners.

There is, however, another article in the same Constitution which provides that retroactive force shall not be given to these new canons. But it was ignored in some cases by President Carranza, as were the official representations of the State Department in Washington, and the principle of nationalisation was applied in certain decrees which, according to some jurisconsults, he had no power to issue.

The effect of that innovation upon the outlanders who had discovered and exploited petroleum, enriching themselves and to a limited extent benefiting the country in the process, can well be imagined. They held that it was calculated to despoil them of what was theirs by law and equity. It struck at the roots of private property. It violated solemn promises made by spokesmen of the nation. The decrees that embody it were held by many to be illegal. The Constitution which provoked those decrees was stigmatised by certain jurisconsults as a violation of the preceding Constitution and therefore devoid of legal force. The protests from Washington, London and

[9] Framed at Queretaro in 1917.

Paris nullified in advance the application of those decrees to American, British and French citizens. But with Carranza these considerations went for nought. He held that oil having acquired a wholly new value the Government in the interests of the nation could readjust the terms of the original grant. Some oil-bearing lands duly purchased he wrested from their rightful owners. Appeals for protection filed by the injured parties in the Supreme Court were left unanswered and all that was vouchsafed these were arguments purporting to show that their interests were not really impaired.

CHAPTER XI

TAXATION OR CONFISCATION?

Two interesting illustrations of Mexico's entanglements are worth recording. They show how defenceless she is before her great northern neighbour and how incumbent it is on this neighbour to use its strength sparingly and in accordance with the promptings of reason and humanity. To-day General Obregón as President of the Republic has but one sheet anchor of salvation—the consciousness that his policy is based on justice and the hope that interest no less than principle may impel the present businesslike Administration of the United States to give him the requisite time and opportunity to unfold it.

Hampered by a relatively light foreign debt for the settlement of which creditors and politicians are daily clamouring, the Obregón Cabinet is at its wits' end to find the wherewithal to pay the interest. And unless it can hit upon some happy device, the country will soon fall under an international financial as well as an American moral tutelage. Usually necessitous governments have the choice between taxation and a loan. But Mexico is an exception. Not yet recognised by the only country able to lend her money, her rulers are obliged to obtain a contribution to the service of the foreign debt by taxing what will bear taxation. And that is oil. There is no other way. Accordingly General Obregón has recently increased the tax on crude oil produced in the country by an average, it is computed, of twenty-five per cent and decreed that the proceeds shall not be swept into the bottomless pit of wasteful expenditure but shall be applied exclusively in making payments on the foreign debt. This measure is gall and wormwood to those companies which possessing no refineries in Mexico will have to pay the augmented impost. Their representatives in Washington immediately called the attention of the State Department to the decree which they regard as illegal in form and "virtual confiscation" in effect, and therefore a twofold crime in international law. They moved that the State Department should include their complaint in its list of claims against the Mexican Government which would then be compelled to adjust its Constitution, its legislation and its taxation to the best interests of the powerful oil interests. Thus the camel's hump would follow his nose into the Mexican tent.

President Obregón contemplates the issue from the same angle of vision as did Russia's eminent financier, the late Count Witte, whose opinion may be summarised as follows. Taxation is an essentially democratic measure. It furthers the interest of labour which has a right to demand that as large a share as is safely possible of the indispensable public expenditure shall be defrayed by taxes on capital. To-day this is a recognised maxim everywhere and a peremptory necessity in the Mexican State which sorely needs money wherewith to heal the wounds inflicted by ten years of anarchy and to undertake reforms without which the State cannot long subsist. And at present money can be had only within the boundaries of the Republic. None of the ordinary devices are of avail. Economy presupposes a fairly well filled Exchequer—a boon which Mexico has not enjoyed since the days of Limantour. Moreover thrift, however stringently practised, would contribute nothing towards the service of the foreign debt, seeing that the pinch of penury is felt in all departments. And at the moment when more money is required than ever before all hopes of a foreign loan are coincidentally barred by what may be termed the Triple Alliance of American, British and French bankers, which has imposed on Mexico a politico-financial boycott.

Every effort made therefore in these conditions to hinder the imposition of adequate taxes on oil is at the same time a clever manœuvre to tighten the noose round the neck of the Mexican State. And this is the construction put upon it by Mexican statesmen.

The only way to ease even partially a situation like this, which is as painful as it is dangerous, is taxation, and to this expedient every country in the world is having abundant recourse today. Indeed in some progressive States taxation has been raised to a level not far removed from confiscation. In others, as in Germany and Sweden, the Governments have compelled the great industries to admit them as partners with a right to a share in the profits. Against these innovations private corporations and individuals have loudly murmured but in no case have their respective Governments ventured to protest on their behalf. For they are all in the same boat. Necessity knows no law but that of justice and it is recognised as a principle that if all the industries of a class are equally liable to a tax, the demands of justice are satisfied. If it be objected that in the case under consideration the industries in question are all owned by English-speaking foreigners who regard it as an unfriendly act, Mexicans might fairly retort that the possession of one lucrative monopoly does not entitle the holder to claim another. Besides, natives and foreigners are alike subjected to the new tax.

There are, however, other ways of looking at the matter. Every country is entitled and every government morally obliged in the interests of its citizens to adopt protective measures in the form of export dues on those natural resources which, once exhausted, can never be replenished. And no foreign State, however painfully its nationals may be hit thereby, can fairly oppose the levy of such a tribute. Unhappily for themselves many countries have failed to exercise that right and their respective governments have neglected to perform the corresponding duty. The consequences which ensued from this lack of provision are writ large to-day in the decay of industry and commerce, the plague of chronic unemployment, the unrest—in some lands the revolt—of labour and general discontent. The twenty-eight millions of workers in England who during part of the year 1921 were dependent for their living on doles meted out by the State were currently supposed to be strike-victims. But one would not be far wrong if one sought for the origin of their pauperism in the improvidence of their rulers who for generations allowed coal, iron ore and other national resources to be sold for a song and made no provision for the lean years which they ought to have known were coming.

To-day statesmen vainly deplore the shortsightedness of their predecessors who permitted the most precious produce with which Nature had endowed their country to be brought to market and disposed of, so to say, for a mess of pottage, to the foreigner who built fleets, railways and established lucrative industries with the proceeds of the transaction. If an importing country is earning, say, a thousand per cent profit on raw materials, is it meet that the country which owns them should be forced to do with ten or twenty per cent? In favour of such a contention there is nothing to be urged.

Examples are many and instructive. Coal is the tap-root of Great Britain's economic and political standing among the nations of the world. Had it been suddenly deprived of that resource, the Empire would have fallen to pieces and the British Isles would have shrunk to the dimensions and the status of Spain. And yet coal has for a century been squandered as though the quantities available were inexhaustible. In the year 1816 only 238,000 tons of that mineral, including culm and bunker coal, were sent out of the country,[1] but in 1840 the quantity was already 1,606,000 tons; in 1854 it reached 4,309,000; and in 1862 it was officially given as 8,302,000. A quarter of a century later the exports totalled 24,461,000 tons; eight years later it was 57,850,000 tons, and in the year 1913 it had risen to 97,720,000 tons, to the joy of the mine-owners. The price it fetched was but a fraction of what must be paid for it to-day. In order to keep up the exportation, the cost of production was forced down so low that the miners had to dispense with a decent living wage as well as the sailors who manned the steamers to Singapore, the Piræus and other foreign ports. Even the mine-owners contented themselves with less than reasonable profits and the country in general with fewer benefits. The workers were ill-paid, badly-housed and chronically embittered against the upper class.

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[1] These figures are taken from *Commerce and Industry,* Statistical Tables.

But the Scandinavian countries, Greece, Russia and other States were enabled to build merchant fleets and establish a powerful carrying trade at England's expense. Moreover, she picked the very best product of her coal measures for the home and foreign markets, leaving the inferior coal to be mined later on at an enormous cost. To-day the best quality coal is said to be well nigh exhausted.

A similar policy of wastefulness were pursued in the case of iron ore. From the year 1819, when Great Britain exported 73,000 tons of iron and steel to certain foreign countries, the quantities sold to foreign consumers went on increasing, at first very gradually and then with amazing rapidity. Thus in the year 1845 the total sent out of the United Kingdom was 352,000 tons; in the year 1853 it reached 1,261,000 tons; in 1872 it had grown to 3,383,000 tons, and in 1907 the official figures were 5,152,000 tons.

The United States dealt and is still dealing in the same thriftless way with its material resources. A noteworthy percentage of its forests has already been cut down. Estimates made by the American Paper and Pulp Association, which admittedly do not claim to be more than approximate, place existing forests in the United States at between 500,000,000 and 550,000,000 acres. This country originally had a forest area of about 850,000,000 acres. Of the present area, 200,000,000 acres are believed to be merchantable timber, 250,000,000 acres partially burned and cut over land on which there is sufficient natural production to insure a fair growth. At the present rate of consumption it is estimated, the stand of matured timber in the United States will be exhausted within fifty years unless a drastic re-afforestation policy is adopted and enforced.

It was those forests and the trades and industries to which they gave rise that enabled railways, steamships and flourishing marts to be constructed. The city of Seattle, for instance, is a product of splendid forests which are now fast vanishing and of mines which are approaching the point of exhaustion, and when these will have ceased to repay the cost of exploitation and nothing remains but agricultural produce, the effects on the city will be painful and far-reaching. The timber sold to the foreigner did not, it is alleged, fetch more than a mere fraction of its intrinsic value, the remaining three-quarters going to enrich countries overseas.

Similar remarks are applicable to the low prices which ruled for iron, copper and oil. And according to the most competent geologists, half of the oil in the United States is already exhausted. Germany bought large quantities of American oil at prices which are now considered to have been inadequate. Her industrial corporations refined it at large profits and manufactured various other articles out of the by-products. For a considerable period the price was one dollar for a barrel, while the Germans sold the gasoline, vaseline, saccharine, paraffine, perfumes and about two hundred other by-products at prices which brought the profits up to twenty dollars a barrel.

A cognate if less apt illustration is afforded by the United States which with a practical monopoly of cotton disposed of the crops during several decades at the rate of from five to eight cents a pound, a price rendered possible only because of cheap labour in the South. This money did not allow the labourers a sufficient living wage, the owners a fair return, nor the railway companies adequate pay for carrying it to market. What could and should have been done was to levy an export duty on the produce, raise the wages of the agricultural labourer and oblige the foreigner to whom an exorbitant share of the value was accruing to contribute to the well-being of the country and the people who were creating it.

In those improvident ways the English-speaking races went on compelling or allowing their own people to dissipate its wealth to enrich strangers overseas.

Now is it unreasonable in itself or tantamount to an unfriendly act towards foreigners for the President of Mexico, who has the interests of his country at heart, to profit by the mistakes of the British and the Yankees? He does not think so, nor does he believe that the great English-speaking nations entertain any such opinion. Mexico's oil, mines and forests constitute her greatest economic assets and her heaviest political curse, and to allow these resources to be carried out of the country in the improvident way in which England and the United States permitted their principal resources to be exported would be a crime. And General Obregón refuses to commit it.

The sharp polemic now going on between the press of Mexico and that of the United States on this question of taxation is confused by the importation into it of political issues. The essence of the matter would seem to be whether or not the increased tax is confiscatory. If the reply is in the negative, there is no objection derived from international law which will hold against it. And that is the stand taken by the Mexican Government. Of course if it could be shown conclusively not merely that production will sensibly fall off in consequence but that the oil industry as a whole will become unprofitable, there should and would be no hesitation on the part of the Mexican Administration to temper the wind to the shorn sheep. For no Government, and least of all one that needed money as badly as does that of Mexico, would be fatuous enough to commit economic suicide by cutting off the main source of its existence. Confiscation or a tax equivalent to this would spell bankruptcy and ruin to the Mexican State, for taxation to the point of confiscation carries its own remedy.

Mexicans urge that to-day oil is being extracted and exported at a rate calculated to alarm the nation's trustees. It is a repetition of what England did with her coal and iron ore. Immense fortunes have been and are being made and taken away by foreigners, few abiding traces of which are left in the land. So considerable are the quantities of Mexican oil at present imported into the United States that voices have been uplifted in the latter country calling for an import duty on it. The Fordney tariff is a conclusive proof that the Mexican oil industry can support a heavier impost than it has yet borne and it is meet that the Mexican States should get the benefit of it. Why should a foreign government as well as foreign corporations draw enormous gains from a product which yields inadequate profits to the country in which it is found? If oil can bear an increase of taxation—and this is admitted by all—why should the Government which contributes nothing to its production be the beneficiary? Again, it cannot be asserted that there is any international law which forbids a government to regulate in the interests of the community the exploitation of natural produce or even manufactured commodities. Every State is at liberty to put in force such measures for the purpose as it deems called for. Examples of the exercise of this right during and since the war are numerous, and for the protection of a source of wealth which can never be replenished, the right is unassailable and the duty to exercise it imperious.

From the fiscal point of view also the arguments that favour the Mexican position are forcible. There is something peculiarly repellent in the contention that a nation should go to rack and ruin for lack of the funds requisite to carry on the Government of the country when that country is teeming with wealth. And Mexico thinks she can discern a Mephistophelian touch in the policy forged by a combination of powerful and unfriendly interests which presses her to pay her debts, yet closes to her all avenues of credit throughout the globe, and by way of crowning the work disputes her right to raise part of the money by taking her full share of the resources which she herself possesses at home. A more stringent boycott, a more deadly grip, it would be difficult to imagine.

CHAPTER XII

CASTING OUT DEMONS BY BEELZEBUB AND SAVING MEXICO IN SPITE OF HERSELF

ALL the vexatious acts of which foreigners could reasonably complain and the quibbles by which it was sought to justify them belong to the past. Even under Madero, Huerta and Carranza the oil companies continued to earn enormous profits. Since General Obregón took over the reins of power the last of the blameworthy practices and dubious doctrines which marked the Carranza régime have ceased to bear sway. A wholly new spirit is incarnate in the present Administration and no country, party or individual sincerely desirous of seeing friendly relations established between Mexico and her neighbours would deliberately ignore its presence or underestimate its significance. It consigns to history those forcible arguments and impassioned appeals by which the self-constituted champions of American rights sought to fulfil their mission and justify their propaganda. Their legitimate claims are now recognised by a man whose words are acts and it only remains to settle the details. Further agitation and propaganda seems superfluous. It would be fatuous to knock at an open door. And yet the knocking is louder now than ever before.

Some Americans—and they are among the most influential—have made up their minds that Mexico is incapable of independent national life and growth, complain of the slowness of Obregón's advance on the path of reform and clamour or intrigue for American tutelage. To this there is a simple answer. In all countries the politician who acquires power is allowed a reasonable time to exercise it beneficially by unfolding and applying his reform schemes, and it would be alike unfair and dangerous to make an exception for the dislocated Mexican State whose President, although never a dabbler in politics, is gradually proving himself to be a first-class statesman and organiser. It would be still more unfair and dangerous to seek to block General Obregón's way by raising international obstacles to domestic reform. For it should be remembered—if indeed it has ever been forgotten—by those who expect immediate wonder-working measures on the part of Obregón, that in Mexico to-day no President can precipitate things without precipitating himself and his administration,—a dénouement which would embarrass even those who forced him to rush on to destruction. But although it is poor policy to jump into the fire in order to escape the smoke, some politicians have adopted it.

Why, one may reasonably ask, if Mexico and the United States are agreed upon essentials—as they manifestly are—should there be a deadlock in their present relations and a grave danger in their future intercourse?

The answer to this query is given by those Mexicans who are familiar with the strivings of the little plutocratic State within the great democratic State. It is because the demands made upon Mexico have never yet been fully and openly propounded. Some of them being esoteric are but vaguely hinted at and remain for the time being *in petto*. Hence the issues are being publicly dealt with in misleading statements while a movement is being fomented in secret which has quite different objects in view, and the men who are directing it are the very last who should put their influence and standing to such a sinister misuse.

The world recognises Secretary Hughes' rectitude and plain dealing. Nobody imagines that a man of his character and standing would consciously lend himself to any group of men or to any pushing politician interested in modifying Mexico's international status. Hence no one can have been bold enough to propose to him the plan of Cubanisation cherished by the conclave in the shade. What they have, however, succeeded in proposing and having accepted is a condition antecedent to recognition which may be made to appear in the abstract harmless enough to an eminent lawyer who has no experience of international affairs, but which when applied in the concrete to international and national politics turns out to be a wedge capable of splitting and shattering the Mexican State. Mr. Hughes' demands for protection and compensation are legally just; and his desire to see a treaty of commerce and amity signed is comprehensible; but insistence on the latter requirement as a condition antecedent to recognition changes their character fundamentally. Fresh earth is good in itself; crystalline water is also good, but mix them together and you have nothing but mud.

In the United States the machinery of Government may from one point of view be likened to the workings of the human intellect. Countless impressions are made by external objects on the senses every day and hour, but of these only a limited number reach consciousness and are passed on to the intelligence. In like manner innumerable demands are laid by influential individuals and corporations before the State Department and are fortified by arguments, complaints, accusations and statistics, but only a very small percentage of them at a time are stamped with the hall-mark of governmental approval and inserted in the official programme. The others may or may not be adopted later on. In the case of Mexico Mr. Hughes has set aside all Mr. Fall's recommendations but one. But that one has produced the present deadlock and may engender further-reaching and more sinister consequences.

No branch of foreign intelligence is so well equipped with vigilance committees, volunteer watchmen and amateur prompters as that which has Mexico for its object. The wealthy corporations and associations have also a political programme for its good ordering and a series of records to prove their case. They likewise possess their agents, their "eyes" and "ears" and their secret propagandists whose zeal at times defeats their aims. It is no exaggeration to affirm that the Mexican Republic is honeycombed with spies after the manner of Russia under Tsar Alexander III. They are in the Post Office, the Telegraph Office, the University, the lodges of Freemasons and in the State Departments. Those foreign corporations are primed therefore with information—oftentimes invented—about politics, the army, economics, the Church, every group of malcontents and about the disaffected generals who are ready to rise against the Government. It is no wonder that those corporations are the first and best informed respecting imminent revolts and coming rebellions.

All these streams of information, opinion and sentiment flow into a central reservoir which is at the disposal of the most powerful unofficial body in the world to-day, a body whose influence makes itself felt continuously and almost irresistibly, in the financial, journalistic, economic and political spheres of the United States. One of these Associations represents all the manifold interests of American citizens in the Southern Republic and is rightly or wrongly believed to be able at will to adopt or have adopted measures of such stringency as would bring the population of that Republic to financial and economic downfall. It can likewise to a marked degree, it is affirmed, enlist public support in the United States on the side of intrinsically unpopular measures. Nowhere is such a task easier than in a young democracy.

"We do not know," writes a distinguished American publicist, "what public opinion really is, or who really supports it. It is so unformed and disorganised, so lacking in real leadership, so unsupported by disciplined thought, that almost *any well conducted propaganda can seize it and temporarily control it to almost any end.* The reason is again that we are not in the habit of thinking in terms of public life. We are thinking in terms of individual opportunity."[1]

One of the favourite expedients adopted towards Mexican public men by the various groups of capitalists promised heavy returns, provided that their discrimination, intuition and tact should prove equal to its execution. It was this: to seek out among prominent politicians and revolutionists in that Republic the individual or individuals who seemed most likely to attain to the presidency in the near future, to cultivate their friendship with assiduity and, if possible, to obtain from them binding promises respecting their future dealings with them.

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[1] "After Thirty Years," by Fred. J. E. Woodbridge in the *Atlantic Monthly,* June, 1921. The italics are mine.

In this way there were a number of pet candidates in this or that camp whose capacities and patriotism they extolled and blazoned abroad and whose friendly co-operation they endeavoured to secure in advance. Victoriano Huerta was one, Francisco Villa was another, Pablo Gonzalez a third and Robles Dominguez a fourth. Some of the presidents *in petto* actually pledged their word to pursue a certain line of action towards American investors, to give them preference over the British and other foreigners in matters of concessions, to abolish the Constitution of 1917 and to realise various other postulates once they had reached the goal of their ambitions. Commitments were also entered into respecting the treatment of the religious question for the benefit of those bodies, American and Mexican, who were especially concerned with this matter. Those stipulations were no secret. I heard them discussed on several occasions. Of these secret conclaves and their covenants the American people knew nothing, neither of course did the Federal Government.

Those Presidents *in petto* included civilians and military leaders, and the circumstance that a man's escutcheon was not wholly free from blots was not regarded as a disqualification. According to an interesting document, a facsimile of which I possess, one of these substitutes for Carranza actually attempted to enlist the services of a stranger representing a foreign Power and to secure his assistance for the purpose of helping him to the Presidential chair. And he promised him a round sum in case of success. A foreign diplomatist when the first elections were at hand made bold to sway the electors by holding out to them the perspective of immediate recognition by his Government if one of these favourites were chosen for the vacant post. Another candidate laid himself open to a criminal charge which if proven—and the incriminating evidence, of which I also possess a facsimile, is in his own handwriting—would put him out of court for all time. But in the eyes of the schemers these taints did not disqualify the chosen one. If he stood for property rights all his sins were forgiven him.

The various candidates were supplied with funds by the groups whose protégés they were, and besides promises for the future they sometimes conferred favours without further delay. One of the companies purchased lands for exploitation but was unable to obtain the title deeds. It appealed to its own candidate for the Presidency, a well known Mexican at present residing abroad, and asked him to interpose his authority or use his influence on its behalf. He made answer: "When I am President, all will be well with you. My future attitude is known to you. In seven or eight months from now your title deeds will be in order and in your possession." But the company's spokesman would not take this answer. He said: "While grateful for your assurances and promises we are now in need of immediate help and you and I know that it is within your power to give it. Unless we receive the title deeds at once we shall be plunged into a sea of troubles. Help us as we are helping you." And after some further parley the protégé started off for the National Palace and obtained what the Company desired.

Those are but a few of many incidents which reveal how far undue foreign ascendency over Mexican politics can go and how incompatible such a condition of affairs is with the normal relations which ought to prevail between the two Republics, and which the great people of the United States is led to believe do actually prevail. There is no doubt that if it realised the extent to which these schemes go to concentrate power in the adjoining Republic in the hands of a few multimillionaires and ambitious politicians and to demoralise the prominent public men of that Republic, it would make short work of the system. Americanism, in its highest form, is sensitive, scrupulous, self-respecting, and it cannot but lose its worthiness, self-respect and its power for good in an environment of mean purpose and corrupting tactics. The circumstance that the Mexicans chosen for these degrading experiments were sometimes the flotsam and jetsam of a society in the melting pot provides neither a justification nor an excuse for those who in the name and under the ægis of a glorious and progressive people use them as tools for a purpose that cannot be openly avowed.

One of the most popular Mexican leaders who was inaccessible to such influences and on whose 'scutcheon there was no blot was General Obregón. No overtures of the character described were ever made to him. And yet the legend was studiously spread that he was like the others, venal, ambitious and unscrupulous, although the contrary was known to be true.

CHAPTER XIII

MORAL GUARDIANSHIP

THE members of the oil and policy groups who believe with the Germans that the strongest defence is to take the offensive, being thus primed with detailed information about every Mexican event and episode of importance, past and present, about every leader and politician of distinction and about every coming man and his vulnerable points,—know the particular motives to which each one is impressible. Hence they can play upon the right chords and could usually foretell a revolt or a revolution until July, 1921, when the upheaval planned in their own oil district under conditions which they are said to have foreknown was trampled out as soon as it began. They are also more fully conversant with every clause and every interpretation of the Constitutions of 1857 and 1917 and with the seamy side of the history of this period than most Mexican Ministers. They influence some of the principal journalistic sources of information and opinion. And they also boast that they have "enlisted" the sympathies and the services of some eminent Mexicans who are in voluntary exile. They invest considerable sums of money in propaganda. In a word, the Mexicans hold that if knowledge be power, this wealthy Junta is well nigh almighty, and if money be the open sesame to either, all its avenues and by-ways have been swept and garnished for their passage.

Some of the avowed objects of the Association at the outset commanded the respect of every friend of justice and equity. They were desired by Europeans as ardently as by Americans, being described as adequate protection for the lives and properties of outlanders in Mexico, and compensation for the financial losses inflicted in the past. That such an influential and well-equipped body should be exceptionally successful in the prosecution of these aims was only to be anticipated. For it pursued them steadfastly and ingeniously, unaffected by minor currents, and never once did it take an official step without having first assured itself of the support of the State Department in Washington. This precaution explains its formidable strength and went far to cause its avowed policy to be identified with that of the permanent element of every Government, Republican or Democratic.

But long before the pristine programme of the Association had been realised, Mexicans were in a quiver lest it should be stretched over more ground. And ominous signs and tokens strengthened their apprehension. Among these was the defection of some of the unprejudiced financiers of Wall Street who disagreed with certain of the objects of the Association as unwarranted. The Mexicans feared interpenetration accelerated by diplomacy, which is the latter day substitute for invasion and annexation. And this was unofficially confessed to by some private members. That was the policy of the late Russian statesman, Count Witte, in the Far East and it bade fair to bring forth the fruits which he anticipated, when it was thwarted by the disturbing action of the German Kaiser who preferred the old system of territorial annexation to the new. Interpenetration, as Witte understood it, consisted in first disclaiming any design upon territory, next in obtaining a firm economic hold in the country by advancing loans and then putting forward various demands for protection for nationals and special legislation as practical corollaries. It is an adaptation of the Arab camel's way: he first puts his nose through the opening of the tent and then draws his body, hump and all, after it. Thus the Eastern Chinese railway which was Witte's first standing ground had to have Russian officials to administer it. These required a Russian semi-military body to protect them against angry natives. The two sets of officials had to have Russian banks and schools. To avoid friction the Russians were allowed to select the Chinese local authorities and lastly to suggest the special legislation which best suited Russian requirements. But there was no intervention, no territorial aggression, no trace of force. The entire arrangement was but the building up of a "durable friendship" and by way of sealing the compact Russia generously undertook to defend China against her enemies with troops and money and to give sound advice to her friend in all cases of diplomatic difficulty with other Powers and to occupy her ports in case of threatened foreign aggression. The present writer was with Count Witte when this treaty of commerce and amity was concluded.

Mexicans are apt to dread similar developments as a result of the unofficial action and far-ranging influence of the Association and its political allies in the background. They feel instinctively that some of the political currents in the world are set in that direction to-day and that comprehensive aims, as friendly as were those of Tsarist Russia in China, may be —are in fact—believed by misinformed statesmen to fit the Mexican situation exactly. They have the examples of Haiti, and Santo Domingo before their eyes and they remember the French proverb *qui a bu boira*. They know that the struggle for the necessaries of economic life among the leading races of the globe will be characterised by a degree of ruthlessness hitherto unexampled. They are aware how attractive a prize is Mexico which has already absorbed forty per cent of all American capital invested abroad and will attract a great deal more as soon as outstanding political scores are wiped off the slate. Mexican oil has been publicly declared essential to the United States. That implies a fixed official attitude on the part of the United States Administration and may well entail in the long run a corresponding official adoption of further clauses of the programme of the Oil and Policy group. In silver production Mexico is ahead of all the world. Nearly every mineral worth exploiting is found in the Republic and can be worked commercially. It is able to vie successfully with Cuba in sugar and with Egypt in cotton production and representatives of every American branch of commerce and industry are already flocking thither to provide for their future wants and await the moving of the waters.

Thus a large part of the trade, commerce and industry of the Republic has passed into the experienced hands of the greatest business people on the globe who are eager for the rest and are being efficaciously seconded by their public trustees. And these workers or their spokesmen feel warranted in demanding adequate facilities for their activity in the shape of domestic legislation and foreign policy, this being a correlate of that. Such legislation, it is urged, must come up to the standard of those who are creating public opinion in the States with a view to the establishment of close permanent relations between the two countries. Prominent among them is the distinguished American statesman—now a member of the Cabinet—whose programme is believed to include an arrangement with Mexico of the same order as that which the Platt Amendment established with Cuba. Another of the unofficial demands on Mexico formulates a series of reforms to be carried through on Church matters, as, for instance, the abolition of all the restrictions enacted against the Roman Catholic clergy, despite the circumstance that however stringent or inexpedient these statutes may be they are virtually identical with those in force in the democratic French Republic and cannot be made the subject of complaint by any foreign Power. In a word, Mexico's Constitution is an eye-sore to these self-constituted reformers and they will not be satisfied until it is superseded by a charter which is in their opinion more conducive to the spiritual, social and political welfare of both Republics. And that is the Constitution of 1857. Only when this has been effected will the intimate union planned by these foreign friends of Mexico be possible between the two countries. They are aware that it would be as unseemly to demand the abrogation of the Constitution of 1917 as it would have been for the mild pacific Quaker to kill the dog that bit him, so they merely call for a series of measures which will oblige the Mexican Government to cancel it and will render that Government a puppet of the United States.

Men's souls, a Russian proverb says, are dusky virgin forests, wherein motives are lost to sight. And in default of knowledge it is fair that the detached outsider should give those would-be foreign saviours of Mexico full credit for the friendship which they profess for it. At the same time, however, one cannot affect surprise if the Mexicans appreciate it in the words of the saying: "The vulture kisses the chicken until there is not a feather left." Has he not done this in Haiti?

Whatever one may think of the strivings of the Association and of the inaccessibility of Mexicans to its reasoning, one must admit that no adequate opinion of the situation can be formed without a clear understanding of the standpoint of each. Thus at any moment one of those unforeseen events of international import in which Mexican history abounds may occur to belie the soundest forecast. The utmost one can do therefore is to make one's deductions from the data actually available and allow a broad margin for the freaks of circumstance.

The ostensible issues, then, between Mexico and the United States are the repeal of all the decrees which demonstrably encroached upon private rights of property, reparation for the past and assurances for the future. Legally and technically the United States Government is well within its rights in preferring these claims. And the Obregón Administration has recognised their justice in word and is satisfying them in deed. But behind these legitimate demands lurks the steadfast conviction of the capitalist interests that they cannot be satisfactorily complied with under present conditions nor so long as the Constitution of 1917 is allowed to stand, and that in case this were feasible it would be undesirable, because the resulting situation must be necessarily transitory and incongruous. One practical inference from this thesis is as good as drawn already; neither a legislative act by the Mexican Congress nor a decision of the Supreme Court will be accepted by the United States Government as a satisfactory solution because a judicial pronouncement and a legislative enactment are both liable to reversal each by the respective institution whence it emanated. What is postulated then is a solemn commitment of a comprehensive character which shall bind the Republic of Mexico, authorise the United States Government to keep it to its word and thus bring about a set of conditions propitious to pacific labour in harmonious fellowship,—conditions, in a word, such as obtain in prosperous Cuba. As for the binding force of any compact however solemn on the United States, Mexicans entertain their own settled opinions. And they base these on the recent tragic history of Haiti.

This consummation, it is discerned, cannot be effected at once. Mexico abhors it. An attempt to achieve it whether from within or without would provoke bitter resentment and resolute resistance. In fact it would plunge the country into civil war once more. It needs a peculiar kind of shameless daring in the Mexican worker which is never found in combination with any civic virtue and it can be entrusted only to those base products of all social upheavals who are willing to serve as the instruments of any sinister influence on conditions advantageous to themselves. And then it goes by an unpleasant name. If a man with such proclivities were in power in Mexico to-day not only would the ostensible issues be speedily revealed but likewise all the other unavowed desiderata would be disclosed by the docile leader congruously with the promptings of the friendly foreign Mentor. Is there such a tool? Rumor answers: Yes, and history awaits the promised proofs.

To advocate the moral guardianship of the United States, is to harp on a string which has no music for the Mexican ear. In all the other Latin-American Republics too the tide of national and racial feeling flows steadily against it. Could they think or feel otherwise, history's records being what they are? They all regard the proposed treaty as the insertion of the thin end of a wedge destined gradually to break up their sovereignty. They apprehend that what is aimed at is the establishment of a permanent agency through which the breezes of salutary inspiration may blow steadily from Washington first to Mexico and then to all the Southern Republics. The past history of Mexico and the correct reading of the current history of Haiti and other little States they take as warnings and as omens. They regard the civilisation of the United States when confined to its own home with respect mingled with awe, but they resent having it superimposed on their own. They unconsciously echo the thought of that patriotic American publicist, W. G. Sumner, who wrote: "There is not a civilised nation which does not talk about its civilising mission just as grandly as we do. The English, who really have more to boast of in this respect than anybody else, talk least about it, but the Pharisaism with which they correct and instruct other people has made them hated all over the globe. . . . For each nation laughs at all the others when it observes these manifestations of national vanity. You may rely upon it that they are all ridiculous by virtue of these pretensions, including ourselves. The point is that each of them repudiates the standards of the others, and the outlying nations which are to be civilised hate all the standards of civilised men. We assume that what we like and practise and what we think better must come as a welcome blessing to Spanish-Americans and Filipinos. This is grossly and obviously untrue. They hate our ways. They are hostile to our ideas. Our religion, language, institutions and manners offend them. They like their own ways, and if we appear amongst them as rulers, there will be social discord in all the great departments of social interest. . . . Now the great reason why all these enterprises, which began by saying to somebody else, 'we know what is good for you better than you know yourself and we are going to make you do it,' are false and wrong, is that they violate liberty."[1] There one has the entire subject in a nutshell. One must reluctantly admit that liberty is among those rights of peoples and individuals which is most imperfectly understood in the United States.

If it could be shown conclusively that the Mexican Constitution as a whole is what certain foreign corporations affirm that it is,—a nefarious charter which legalises confiscation,—there is no doubt that the President of the Mexican Republic would have refused to swear fidelity to it until and unless it was abrogated. Nay more, if it could now be demonstrated that any article of it conduces to a breach of international law, measures would be enforced to modify it. Already it has been amended in several details. Don Venustiano himself sponsored various projects tending to better it. Even lately certain projects have been drafted for the like purpose. But the ground taken by Mexicans who have scrutinised the oil companies' complaints is that the origin of their grievances lies not in the Constitution itself but in certain presidential decrees which ran counter to its spirit and that they have since joined hands with the enemies of Mexico's sovereignty.

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[1] *War and Other Essays,* by W. G. Sumner, pp. 303-305.

Thus the more active protectors of American rights start with begging the question and fabricating proofs. They assume that the Constitution of 1917 is a perennial source of evil, keeps Mexico in a continuous ferment of turmoil, making her a nuisance to her neighbours, and that until it is done away with that country's condition cannot change sufficiently for the better to warrant the moral and financial support of the United States, nor even to justify further forbearance. In plain terms, it must be abrogated if the Republic is to live. They forget that the past is not the present and ignore the new order of things. The United States, they further urge, can no longer tolerate the dangerous vagaries of a semi-savage neighbour running amuck, killing their citizens, destroying American property, trampling on American rights, sending the poison of bolshevism into United States cities and rendering it increasingly difficult for law-abiding people in either country to discharge their duties, and perpetrating these enormities in the name of constitutional law,—as though such excesses took place in post-revolutionary Mexico or indeed of late years at all.

This, it is argued by those who are intrepid in propagandist logic, is one of those cases in which the maxim—from a theory it is fast becoming a maxim—of "Manifest Destiny" is fairly applicable. When the United States quarreled with Spain in Florida and Louisiana—the argument runs—it had right on its side, because Spain was clearly unfitted to govern her dependencies in accordance with the dictates of humanity and over and above all was unwilling to discharge her international commitments and functions. Arrogating to herself extensive rights she shirked the correlative duties and implicitly claimed to be a law unto herself. And as this was merely one of the aspects of the case presented by savage tribes which strive to hold their territory against civilised colonists, it was very properly treated as such by the United States. Mexico is in a like plight to-day, say the would-be reformers from the great Northern Republic, well knowing that the statement is utterly at variance with the truth. Her pacific population is cruelly oppressed by a gang of thieves and cut-throats whose squalid and immoral policy cries out to civilised mankind for repressive measures. Obregón may be the honest man he is represented to be, but what is one sane individual among so many furious madmen? A foil and nothing more. And the Constitution to which Carranza appealed for his confiscatory decrees may be relied upon by Obregón's successor for similar monstrosities. It is certain then that Mexico's progressive and kindly disposed neighbour is invested with the natural right and bound by the moral obligation to shoulder the white man's burden and assume the minimum degree of indirect jurisdiction adequate to enable it to bestow on the population peace, order and guarantees so that commerce and industry may be prosecuted there.

And the first step to be taken towards bringing back the country to the "normalcy" of the Diaz régime must be the abrogation of the obnoxious Constitution. This was also one of the moves made by the United States officials in their beneficent labour for the establishment of "tolerable conditions" in Haiti. Colonel Littleton Waller, commanding the United States expeditionary forces in Haiti, wrote to the President of the Haitian Senate[2] demanding the general revision of the Constitution and the dissolution of the Senate, should this body decline to co-operate with the Constituent Chamber in this sense.[3]

The President of the Haitian Senate resented this well meant exercise of fraternal authority and replied: "The attempt to abolish the Senate is a flagrant violation of the Constitution and is consequently tantamount to a revolutionary act."[4]

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[2] Paul Laraque.

[3] Extract from letter sent by Colonel Littleton Waller on 27th April, 1916.

[4] Extract from reply sent by Paul Laraque on 28th April, 1916.

None the less, the Senate was summarily and unconstitutionally dissolved, the lower house was illegally transformed into a constituent assembly and a dictatorship was established in lieu of the Constitutional Government.

CHAPTER XIV.

FLAWS IN THE CONSTITUTION OF 1917.

THE magnitude of the interests at stake and the serious nature of the outlook justify a brief review of the international perils with which Mexico is confronted and of the alleged nexus between them and the present Constitution.

This Constitution is by no means all evil. It possesses certain redeeming traits which are well worth retaining. At the Congress of Queretaro its authors introduced provisions into the new charter which were framed to deal with social conditions unknown in the year 1857 when the previous Constitution was drawn up. These hastily drafted enactments protect women and children and rescue them from the status of serfdom theretofore prevalent, devise a reasonable formula for regulating the question of remuneration, oblige employers to pay their workmen in legal currency, to refrain from whittling down wages by fines, to erect sanitary dwellings to be had for fair rents, to eliminate gambling dens and generally to treat the workers as human beings and free agents. And in this respect the Constitution of 1917 marked a distinct advance on that of 1857 and challenges the opposition of certain oil companies.

But its framers did not stop here. They went to extremes, unduly favouring the workman at the expense of the employer, compelling the latter in certain emergencies to continue to operate at a loss, giving the former an undetermined share in the profits and generally upsetting the equilibrium which should exist between capital, labour and intelligence and which Obregón is now bent on restoring. Thus, an amendment to the Constitution passed at a subsequent date[1] lays it down that neither suspension of work by employers nor a strike by the workmen is lawful without the assent of the Executive, and that if one or the other takes place without this assent, the Executive is warranted in taking over control of the business, if he deems it to be of public interest.

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[1] In December, 1918.

These and kindred enactments, it is agreed, are calculated to deter capital from seeking investments in Mexico. They are further of a nature to spur the workmen to sinister efforts to overturn the entire social system. And these, it is added, are precisely the consequences which the Constitution has already generated. Here is one of the many proofs adduced. At the Convention of the Labour Party in Pachuca the following resolution was passed unanimously: "The Mexican Labour Party has ever stood by the side of the proletariat, aiding it to win its total emancipation. It holds that the proletariat is warranted, at the fitting moment, to seize and keep the lands, machinery and all the means of production and transportation, and likewise to control production and consumption by means of a system of social organisation which shall guarantee economic equality in every branch."[2] A comprehensive programme drafted by grown-up children!

An eminent Mexican publicist[3] commenting on this remarkable profession of faith states that according to the Mexican press it counts upon advocates inside the Cabinet, who would fain see capitalism and private capital generally superseded by nationalisation and the overthrow of the Government of which they are members. He contends that the working men in Mexico are immune from real punishment if they break their contracts, however wantonly, whereas the employer can be held to his bargain or chastised condignly. "By terror the syndicates impose their will on the community and the Government, whereas it is exceedingly difficult for a Government to exercise constraint over the syndicates by its terrorism. . . . The syndicates are therefore irresponsible, and in law contracts with irresponsible parties are unknown." And he admonished his countrymen that "the bulk of the capital which operates in Mexico is of foreign origin, and the Great Powers upon whom rests the duty of protecting it will not permit it to be made the slave of Mexican Labour Syndicates. . . . In a short span of time Mexicans will be forced to the conclusion that *capital is a slave which will kill,* unless indeed the policy announced by General Obregón turns out to be as trenchant as the terror with which the community is assailed by the proletariat."[4]

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[2] *El Universal*, 6th April, 1921.

[3] Don Francisco Bulnes.

This apprehension of bolshevism—for that is what it amounts to—is one of the favourite battle grounds of those American friends in Mexico who are anxious to import into that Republic the material prosperity and politico-social arrangements which prevail in Cuba. No war cry, it is rightly assumed, could be more effective than this. It appeals powerfully to financiers and men of business on whose good will the Mexican State must ultimately depend for the means of setting its house in order. Everything that scares or discourages foreign capitalists is a danger that transcends most others and must be removed, even at a heavy political sacrifice. But whether the bolshevist symptoms alleged are traceable to the Constitution of 1917 or flow from that of 1857 which confers sovereignty upon a number of sparsely populated States, hampers the executive and frustrates the only efficient measure with which the malady can be combated—is a matter which will bear discussion and will be touched upon in another chapter as will also the allegation that bolshevism is rampant in the Republic. If it is true, as Señor Bulnes contends, that only the Central Government can stem the bolshevist tide, surely it follows that in order to produce the desired effect that Government must have a free hand throughout the entire Republic; and it is equally clear that the sovereignty of the separate States must be done away with, seeing that it ties the hands of the Executive and opens the door to inexperienced administrations like that of Yucatan.

It is further asserted that scant encouragement is held out by the Charter of 1917 to foreign bankers. They are treated as covert enemies of the nation,—they on whose good will Mexico absolutely depends for the success of the work of reconstruction. And without reconstruction from within official recognition is but a meaningless form. Article 27 contains this provision: "Banks duly organised under the laws governing institutions of credit may make mortgage loans on rural and urban property in accordance with the provisions of the said laws but they may not own nor administer more real property than that which is absolutely necessary for their direct purposes."

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[4] *El Universal,* 6th April, 1921: El Esclavo que Matara.

Now what, one naturally asks, is the extent of the real property absolutely necessary within the meaning of that act? In order to ascertain this the words, expert opinion says, must be construed in the light of the foregoing clause which enacts that "Commercial Stock companies shall not acquire, hold or administer rural properties. Companies of this character which may be formed to develop any manufacturing, mining, petroleum or other industry, excepting only agricultural industries, may acquire, hold or administer lands only in an area absolutely necessary for their establishments or adequate to serve the purposes indicated, which the Executive of the Union or of the respective State in each case shall determine."

It is inferred from both those clauses that banks may not acquire, hold or administer rural properties, nor indeed any industrial possessions which have no direct bearing upon banking purposes. And this, it is pointed out, is tantamount to a prohibition to lend money to agriculturists who will consequently be abandoned to the clutches of the usurer. For the usual guarantee of such a loan is the hacienda or estate of the borrower, and circumstances such as inability to pay interest may oblige the Bank to take possession of the property and administer it. To dispossess it of the right to do this is to take away the only guarantee available and therefore to render such advances of money impossible. The final outcome, it is contended, is that these clauses deal a stunning blow to foreign banks and also to Mexican landlords.[5]

A country, it is affirmed, which upholds legislation of this suicidal character is on the high road to economic ruin. Unsuited to any contemporary State it is absolutely calamitous to Mexico whose policy must be directed to encourage foreign capital to come into the country, and the Constitution that contains it should be abolished.

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[5] Cf. *Excelsior,* 8th April, 1921.

On the other hand, Mexicans of a logical turn of mind, while ready to amend those loosely worded clauses, would confine the change to them. An article, after all, is but a fraction of the Constitution, and Mexicans feel, as do the English, that in legislation transformation is better than creation out of nothing and that to go back to a Constitution framed sixty-four years ago when most of the crucial problems of to-day were not yet mooted would be retrogression worthy only of reactionaries. Hitherto several amendments have been passed which were rendered pressing by new requirements or old errors and this process is obviously preferable to the forging of such a brand-new Constitution as foreign politico-commercial interests advocate.

One of the densest banks of storm clouds which hang over Mexico to-day is alleged to be formed by various aspects of the agrarian movement now going forward in the Republic and by the many abuses to which it has given rise. And yet it is doubtful whether an agrarian problem can be said to form part of the actualities of contemporary Mexican politics. The amount of land in the Republic still awaiting cultivation is enormous. I have myself visited a great part of the country and I write with first-hand knowledge. The soil in many districts is uncommonly fertile, in others it is potentially so. Every kind of fruit can be produced in abundance and perfection on the coast and the tableland. The most palatable strawberries, mangoes, oranges, bananas, pineapples are awaiting transport facilities to enable them to vie with those of the fruit-bearing countries which dominate the world's markets to-day. Cotton, sugar, fibre and rubber lands are extensive and relatively cheap. The northern States bid fair to become the greatest ranching country on the American Continent. In a word, there is soil enough to satisfy the acutest land-hunger that the people is likely to feel for a long sequence of years to come.

What the country is deficient in is a class of hardy enterprising tillers equipped with technical training, capital and credit wherewith to purchase and use the requisite implements of modern agricultural industry. The writer of these pages who travelled over the whole Republic was profoundly struck with the backwardness, poverty and quietism of the people, their primitive agricultural expedients and their slow and faint response to outward stimuli. Wooden ploughs, harrows that resemble broken rakes, water carried to the fields by human beings and harvests that barely keep body and soul together are among the phenomena that attract attention. Beyond the attainment of the most meagre results the peasant seldom feels impelled to advance. "In these parts we live in poverty," said the spokesman of a delegation in the State of Chiapas to General Obregón in my presence, "but we live content and we shall die content if you guarantee us peace. That is all we ask." Exactly. They are contented with too little. Soul-eating rust makes many of them fail at the critical stages of many an undertaking, that is to say, at the outset and the end. Initiative and constancy are the qualities of which they stand most in need.

That people of this type are eager to get land to till and are willing and able to till it is a statement that requires an effort of the imagination to accept. Yet this assumption has been made the starting point for a powerful movement in favour of parcelling out the great estates among the "land-hungry," of establishing peasant proprietorship on a vast scale and of raising the material life-standard of the native population. Careful Mexican writers[6] have been at great pains to show the fallacy of this assumption and the untrustworthy character of the data underlying it and there is little doubt that it is being used very largely as a lever to embarrass the Government. Still President Obregón could not but take cognisance of the current, however artificial its origin might be, and devise a formula for the bestowal of land upon those who could prove that they were really willing and able to cultivate it. Their right to it is beyond question. The ideas which he put forward in the Chamber[7] reveal a thorough grasp of the subject and a masterly method of dealing with it, but owing to the sovereignty of the States of the Union his intentions have been temporarily thwarted from time to time. Consequently this impotence to deal with questions which are national and international in their bearings—and the land problem partakes of both characters—is an argument not against the Constitution of 1917 but against the federal system of State structure.

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[6] Don Francisco Bulnes is the most eminent among them.

[7] In November, 1920.

It has been demonstrated by statistics, which have been confirmed by a number of concrete cases recently published, that the Indians, while eager enough to get possession of lands belonging to others, have seldom the means or the will to cultivate them and make haste to sell them to the highest bidders. In some instances they refused point blank to take them over at all, in others they at once disposed of them to the first purchasers they could find. What they particularly covet are flourishing estates, but only with a view "to impoverish them, by subsisting on their spontaneous produce. If on the Indian's lot there happens to be nopal plantations he lives on the fruits; if woodland, he hews the trees until there are none left; if game be there, he hunts until he has caught or driven every animal away; if there be fish in the water, he fries them in his pan. This and two or three chunks of lard satisfy him and he asks for nothing better. We supplied a striking instance of this last Saturday, in the narrative of how that most flourishing estate, *La Purisima,* was plundered and destroyed with ruthless thoroughness. Converted into common lands, the Indian first devastated it and then transformed it into a marsh for duck-shooting. To-day that whilom source of wealth is become a desolate, pestilent, barren swamp, in which nothing is cultivated and where the very people who clamoured for it are perishing."[8]

Since the agrarian agitation began to be utilised as an engine of political warfare, some prominent Mexican publicists solicitous for the economic well-being of their country have been bringing to the cognisance of the general public the master facts that bear upon agriculture and upon the introduction of a system of peasant proprietorship after the French model.

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[8] *Excelsior,* 5th April, 1921.

And these data, which tally with what is known of the temperament of the population and seem decisive, point to the absence of any widespread demand for land or indeed of any serious demand whatever for the parcelling out of large estates. This, it may be parenthetically remarked is a matter of genuine regret. Were there real eagerness among the natives to possess and till the soil as it should be tilled, Mexico's future would look brighter beyond compare. But as things now are, it seems as though the soil were doomed to pass wholly into the hands of foreign capitalists who are already the masters of so many other sources of the country's wealth. In a word, the process which is now going forward has been described as the Americanisation of Mexico, using the word American as synonymous with Yankee.

General Obregón grasps the situation, eschews extremes, and is playing the only trump card in his hand. He will not brook the survival of these latifundia, which besides being excessively large are partly uncultivated or cultivated only by antiquated methods. These he will have cut up in every case in which the public interest demands it. Other large estates properly stocked and tilled he will leave intact. The Indians shall have all the land they can cultivate, but should they be unwilling or unable to till those lots, the President will encourage the best qualified husbandmen he can find in the old world to immigrate to Mexico, settle down as agriculturists and give a stimulating example to the natives. In time they will become prosperous Mexican citizens and in the meanwhile they will have shown practically what can be got out of the land by proper treatment and have thereby awakened in their neighbours a spirit of fruitful emulation.

This is the conception of a patriot who is a statesman. And the systematic opposition which it has encountered is among the difficulties that block his way.

Some European observers who have an axe of their own to grind have recently recorded the results of their investigations, and these shed an interesting light on the reality as distinguished from the idyllic picture painted by day-dreamers and held up to the world by professional agitators. One of the most methodical and level-headed foreign economists[9] who gathered, sifted and published a number of illuminating data respecting the agrarian experiments already tried, is worth hearkening to. He writes: "In the district of Temax, Yucatan, the communal lands of Temax, Tzoncahuich, Tzitzantum, the town of Tzilan and the port of the same name were split up during the past ten years into normal farms of about four hectares.[10] The eight hundred families which received their lots, with the exception of ten at the most, have already sold their farms. In the municipal territory of Causahcab, situated in the same district, a landlord got possession of the communal lands of the natives and set to work to grow hennequin[11] there. The Government took possession of the lands and gave them back to the Indians without any expense to the latter. Down to August, 1907, when I visited that district, I found that out of the 300 families thus benefited only forty had kept their possessions. The other 260 had sold theirs at once to the landlord."

In Tabasco the result was similar. There the lands of twenty-one townships were also parcelled in the same way, but "out of the recipients of these allotments who numbered some 4,500 no less than 75 per cent disposed of them to third persons.

"In Pocyaxuma, a district of Campeche, the common land was partitioned among fifty-three families. And all of them, with the exception of three or four, got rid of their allotments. In Hecelchacan, situated in the same State of Campeche, the great majority of 200 families sold their farms even before they had received their title deeds. In Tenabo, in the same district, the 200 families which were to have had farms bestowed upon them, refused to contribute to pay the fee of the surveyor who was to have delimited them."[12]

One of the principal Mexican journals commenting on these significant manifestations of the temper of the natives, writes: "The land-hunger by which the Mexican rural class is sup-

[9] O. Penst.

[10] A hectare is 2,471 acres.

[11] Sisal hemp which is used in the United States for binding-twine.

[12] *Excelsior,* 11th April, 1921.

posed to be possessed is not noticeable. Above all, there is no token of a desire to acquire a piece of unexploited land, with a view to put value into it by labour. And in the absence of this striving are we to assume that with such a group of people we can form a class of husbandmen who will extract from the soil not merely the wherewithal for their own existence but also further produce to augment the resources of the entire community? What we do behold is eagerness to get possession of lands already cultivated by others and improved by various installations, machinery, etc. And that is what, to employ the term used by the Commissions, we feel tempted to call plunder."[13]

It is fair, however, to admit in advance that some of these phenomena may be capable of an explanation by local conditions which differs from that ascribed to it by those investigators and it is also worth noting that in the northern States the inhabitants are both able and willing husbandmen.

Those American would-be saviours of Mexico who seem bent on having the Constitution of 1917 abolished argue that the principle of nationalisation is an apple of discord which will keep the population of the Republic in a continuous ferment that may at any moment come to a head in civil war. They add that a standing menace of this gravity is a matter of deep concern to themselves and that in the interests of both countries it must be removed. This is another striking instance of the two-fold aspect of all Mexico's troubles. Every domestic problem presents disconcerting international bearings concerning the solution of which the northern Republic has a friendly word to say. It may not be amiss to glance at the nexus between the "anticipated civil war" and the principle of nationalisation as it appears to the American reformers. It is found in the gross injustice which is being done to Mexican citizens who in virtue of the law are being denied rights accorded to foreigners. The State Department in Washington is reported to have formulated an anticipatory protest against the probable sub-division of large agricultural estates. Thereupon the American chargé d'affaires, Mr.

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[13] Ibidem.

Summerlin, is said to have made a report to Secretary Hughes to the effect that he had heard indirectly that the Mexican Government had affirmed its resolve not to break up any estates belonging to American citizens.[14] What that would mean is that American citizens would enjoy privileges while Mexicans are to forfeit rights.

Against this one-sided arrangement the Mexican press has uplifted its voice with passionate emphasis and curious foreboding. "It is no secret," writes one of the principal organs, "that various foreign land-owners who protested against the encroachments on their property made by the local agrarian juntas have received redress. Mexicans, on the other hand, have been compelled to resign themselves to the abuses and to endure this spoliation." Very significantly the journal adds: "It is not we Mexicans who will protest against the 'inequality of treatment' thus meted out to residents of one and the same country under the same laws; it is unquestionable that the protests will emanate from the foreigners." . . . In effect, it is unquestionable. Many other analogous demands put forward by outlanders operate and are meant to operate as wedges for splitting up the actual State structure. Another of the "dangers" confidently predicted consists in this, that the Mexican landlords seeing themselves defenceless will, as a last resort, dispose of their properties to foreigners.[15]

The sudden discovery of oil in the State of Tabasco precipitated matters. Tabasco is a State in which Mexican landlords are numerous and they naturally enough hastened to strike the iron while it was hot and make the most of their possessions. The petroleum companies, equally eager to fructify the opportunity, had their representatives hie to the spot, where transactions were effected with a speed which took the authorities by surprise. "A veritable fever has fallen upon the businessmen of the United States," writes one of the Mexican press organs[16] "and likewise upon the foreign companies which own oil interests in Mexico, actuating them to acquire rights in Tabasco where there is no longer any doubt that the subsoil contains petroleum in vast quantities. . . . A legion of agents of the oil companies rushed hither-thither hunting for the owners of the lands from whom they proposed to lease or buy them on such advantageous terms that the authorities were put on their guard." [17]

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[14] *Excelsior,* 15th April, 1921.

[15] Ibidem.

[16] *Excelsior,* 8th April, 1921.

Thereupon the Central Government instructed the Governor to hinder transactions of the nature described and informed him that a commission would shortly be despatched to Tabasco. But here again the federal system, not the Constitution of 1917, was made the pretext for obstruction. The Governor of Tabasco proposed to have special State legislation passed on the subject, independently of the Federal Government! On this the Ministry of Industry telegraphed pointing out that the only authority competent to make laws on the subject was the central government, to which alone, as the nation's trustee, the produce of the subsoil belonged, and that consequently transactions concluded by the landowners with agents of the oil companies would be null and void. This injunction was beyond all question warranted. For Article 27 of the Constitution of 1917 nationalises the produce of the subsoil from the date on which it was promulgated, but only from that date. Lands purchased or leased before then will have to be excepted, but none others. Now the Ministry of Industry and Commerce is said to have cognisance of crooked deals concluded between agents of oil companies and owners of lands last March in which, with the connivance of the sellers, a false date was registered, a date anterior to the publication of the Constitution of 1917, for the purpose of obtaining the benefits of the clause of non-retroactivity.[18] The greed of gold is almost as fertile a source of ingenuity as natural hunger and a more powerful dissolvent of the moral law.

In Mexico where a long spell of anarchy has made the voice of misery imperious and that of morality often inaudible, money can accomplish things greater than in Europe, but not as great as in the most cultured States of the New Continent. Patriotism which is not a particularly hardy plant among certain sections of the Mexican population can but fitfully withstand its subtle withering force. Hence the temptation to owners of lands and agents of oil companies to conspire to defeat the law. Hence, too, the accusations so freely bandied about of late by the press organs, the one accusing the other of selling its convictions for the money of the oil companies and the retaliatory charges of blackmail launched against certain newspaper managers by the oil companies' representatives.[19] Thus the "Universal" writes triumphantly at the close of one of these unedifying controversies: "If anybody has asked or received money from the oil men, it is the very people who some months ago dared to calumniate the 'Universal'."[20]

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[17] *Excelsior*, 8th April, 1921.

[18] *Universal*, 9th April, 1921.

The fact would seem to be that in certain spheres of demagogy in Mexico as elsewhere it is occasion that makes people honest. And the task of President Obregón is rendered uncommonly difficult and dangerous by the rareness of this occasion, owing to the frequent offers of bribes. Some foreign agents have done much to foster and spread corruption. For the laws of the State and those of morality present but a frail barrier against systematic dishonesty. This unsavoury theme, however, deserves special treatment. The President surely knows that to-day no less than in the epoch of Moses, whenever the dance around the golden calf is as lively as it is in the oil region, the tables of the law are doomed to be broken. And he and many of his compatriots have often fervently wished that Nature had not handicapped Mexico with a sinister combination: the boon of vast material wealth, the drawback of a listless, poverty-stricken population and the blessing of a progressive neighbour endowed with the gift of exploiting both. Patriotic Mexicans must feel tempted to repeat the words uttered by Señora Torcuata in Alárcon's story of the buried treasure: "Accursed be treasures and mines and devils and everything else that lies buried beneath the surface of the earth, excepting water and the dead bodies of the faithful." [21]

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[19] The legal adviser of the Huesteca Petroleum Company, Señor Castelazo Fuentes, publicly stated that the Manager of the *Heraldo de Mexico* offered him the neutrality of that paper and its silence for fifteen thousand dollars and the Manager asserts that it was Señor C. Fuentes who sought for the alliance of a good newspaper. Cf. *Heraldo,* 19th March, 1921, and the *Universal,* 18th March, 1921.

[20] Ibidem.

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[21] "Malditos sean los tesoros, y las minas, y los diablos, y todo lo que está debajo de tierra, menos el agua y los fieles defuntos." Cf. *Moros y Cristianos,* by Pedro A. de Alarcon, Chapter XIII.

CHAPTER XV

OIL AND POLITICS

THAT Mexico's destinies should be influenced if not dominated by the oil interests is natural and inevitable. These constitute such a paramount element in her economic life that even domestic politics in that country is now wedded to them for better or for worse.

The American oil companies in Mexico recently announced[1] that during the first quarter of 1921 oil stood for no less than 62.1 per cent of that country's total exports to the United States, while of its principal imports (manufactures of iron and steel) 40 per cent enter very largely into the oil industry. Thus it is petroleum that supplies the staple of Mexico's foreign trade and industry and will have to bear the brunt of taxation. The bulk of the revenue is drawn from that, and before other forms of commerce and industry can be fully revived or be called to life to vie with oil, the treaty, it is assumed, will have been signed and the Constitution amended or abolished, or else Mexico will be on the way to Cubanisation. That is the current belief in the United States. No wonder the attention of natives and foreigners is focussed upon the sub-soil and its treasures or that the contemporary history of the Republic is soaked through and through with oil. But the allegation that the oil men have lately broken bounds and encroached upon the domain of politics should not blind one to the fact that certain of their grievances were genuine and their demand for the protection of private property justified at least in law.

The owners of the oil fields, the organisers of the independent industries, the capitalists and the shippers are mostly men of English speech. The land which they exploit was bought or leased, sometimes at very low prices and rents, but in most cases in formal accordance with the legislation in vigour at the time. Hence their titles are on the whole juridically unassailable. On other and higher grounds their titles have been called in question, but with this aspect of the matter we are not concerned. It was that legislation, then, wise or unwise, which guaranteed their rights to the produce of the subsoil and warranted a large expenditure of money, brains and labour in research and exploitation. It is true that they enriched themselves rapidly, but they also benefited indirectly and to a far too limited extent the country whence they drew and exported their wealth. And, like most foreigners of English speech, the bulk of them were well-meaning, blustering and ill-informed and their attempts to get on with the natives kindly, clumsy and unsuccessful.

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[1] In a pamphlet entitled: "What Oil Means to Mexico."

One day the law which had protected their enterprise was partially altered by the legislative enactment [2] which has given rise to the sequence of grievances, protests and problems that now threaten the sovereignty of the Republic. For at bottom the stake at present at issue is the sovereignty of the Mexican State and not merely protection of rights or redress of grievances.

According to Mexican accounts, there was no active co-operation between American investors and Mr. Fall until the downfall of the Carranza Administration. Most of the former professed to be eager only for the enjoyment of their legal rights. They occasionally hinted at intervention in wild unmeasured terms, but their deliberate aim as expressed to others was professedly unpolitical. That was a prudent attitude. For so long as Carranza retained the reins of power there was no need of any co-ordinate action on the part of the politicians and the oil groups, because it was manifest to all that his policy if persisted in after March, 1921, would end by provoking intervention. And there was a general consensus of opinion that his successor would uphold that policy unflinchingly. It was for this welcome conjuncture that the Fall Report was hurriedly terminated and published. Had the salutary revolutionary movement headed by General Obregón been trampled out, as Carranza believed and assured me it would. be, there is not the slightest reason to doubt that American intervention, together with all that that implies, was a foregone conclusion, little though the late President realised the danger. And certain of the foreign interests were waiting for that and preparing to profit by it.

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[2] By Article *27*.

At this posture of affairs I visited the Republic. I came equipped with only a general knowledge of Mexican affairs at their points of contact with world politics and of Mexican history, including that of the Maya civilisation and language which I had studied many years before. My first step was to betake myself to the study of the political and social conditions, to bring to bear upon them an independent judgment and freely to record the results of my observations in the light in which they appeared to me. I was fettered by nc preconceived ideas or purpose.

I found that the potential results of the great revolution which had placed Señor Carranza at the head of the Republic had been exchanged for the small money of personal and partisan aggrandisement. A revolution can justify itself only by working desirable changes, by setting up a better ordering than that which it pulled down. And this justification was lacking. Local, State, national and international affairs were going from bad to worse. The misery of the common people was widespread and intense. This I could attest as an eye witness, for I went among the lowest and most forlorn sections of the population in several cities, visited their squalid dens, conversed with the sick, came in contact with some who were homeless, diseased and dying uncomplainingly. Only the persons who have beheld the results of the Allied blockade on the children and the women of Central Europe can paint a fairly adequate mental picture of some of the scenes and types that came to my notice. Financially, economically and politically the inhabitants of one of the richest countries on the globe had sunk into a Serbonian bog of misery and disease and were fast going under. The Federal State was little more than a board of directors working for its own enrichment and that of its friends. Its every undertaking resembled a structure raised on the quicksands. The conviction was forced upon me that with Carranza or a puppet of his choice grasping the helm the Ship of State was doomed to flounder in United States waters and to receive a pilot from that Republic. That was evident to the dullest apprehension. The men of money desired only that it should become widely known and that the American public should be properly keyed to the coming transformation of Mexico.

The principal objects of the Carranza Government as they seemed to me were the establishment of the régime on solid foundations and the perpetuation in power of the President's partisans. All foreign and domestic policies were at that time being carefully subordinated to those aims. I found no united nation, no self-conscious classes, no compact organism. Before a group had time to crystallise and become the nucleus of an influential political or social organism, it was dissolved in the crucible and poured anew into the seething mass. There was no middle class, no farmers' class, no constitutional opposition. Every section of the population which in virtue of its special interests, material or spiritual, of its traditions, aims or ideas might be expected to favour a fixed independent policy or to form a solid kernel around which other groups might rally had been disintegrated. For among the postulates of the system were an indifferent or at any rate a quiescent population and the absence of organised opposition. And these postulates were secured by threats of severe punishment. The conclusion was forced upon me that such a Government could not claim to be national, pacific, constitutional or stable and was therefore but a gliding shadow deserving no more than a chronological record.

From every view-point then Mexico seemed to me to be the embodiment of stagnation. There was no social, no political, no industrial movement in the country, no burning issues, no spiritual or intellectual life, no salutary contest between opposing principles, no established way of shaping public opinion or sentiment with a view of enlisting them in the service of men,—in a word, none of the various manifestations which denote and foster national vitality, nothing but stagnation and sullen resignation on the one hand and endless petty strife, more purposeless then the civil war of the Fronde, on the other hand. Under such conditions no political development or social growth, no satisfaction to the deepest and best elements of human nature, seemed possible. Politico-social reconstruction was out of the question so long as the Carranza régime, which was partly answerable for this deplorable condition, held the field. And many of the signs and tokens pointed to its surviving, at any rate until the advent and action of the Republican Administration in the United States. The conclusion was drawn by interested foreign observers that the regenerative force necessary and adequate to infuse a new spirit into the country could come only from without because in Mexico itself under prevailing conditions collectivity of effort was an impossibility. Hence the foreign reformers could content themselves with watching, waiting and bruiting abroad the true state of affairs.

At the end of Carranza's political road, therefore, which seemed bound to be disastrous, lurked intervention or worse. On the only occasion when I conversed with him I ventured to intimate to him in courteous language that I was convinced of this. For so far as one could then see there was no *tertium quid* worth considering. A revolution was indeed a possibility and is assumed by onlookers in the United States to be sempiternally impending. None of the interested spectators, political or industrial, anticipated an improvement from any such upheaval. On the contrary, they expected confusion to be worse confounded and intervention to be more peremptorily called for. And from this chaos they would evolve an order all their own.

And therein lay the source of their fateful miscalculation.

For while I was still investigating conditions, a sudden and root-reaching change came over the situation. A *deus ex machina* in the person of General Obregón appeared and put a wholly different complexion on the national and international problems by introducing an element of transformation. At first neither the nature nor the vastness of this metamorphosis was realised by those foreign spectators who are wont to lump all Mexicans in one class and label it "inferior" or "benighted." But as soon as I began to record my impressions of General Obregón, my estimate of the extent to which his influence would upset current expectations and projected policies and my conviction that in his case the line between biography and national history would shortly fade away, the attitude of those interested foreigners underwent a noteworthy change. They belittled the importance of the downfall of Carranza and the advent of the new men and sought to force an issue on the strength of the Fall Report which Obregón's assurances had consigned to the limbo of history. They also strove by every means in their power to hinder American excursionists from visiting Mexico and published an appeal to certain Chambers of Commerce with this object. They would fain cause Mexico's history to stop short on the last page of the Fall Report and direct the ensuing stream of public indignation against the Mexican Republic, while ignoring the complete change in the situation which the just and friendly polity of the new Administration had imported into the problem. Translated into plain English, there curious manœuvres meant that the politico-capitalist group was determined to persist in its policy of præter-diplomatic pressure—or in plain English, intervention, —for the purpose of depriving the greatest and wealthiest of the Latin-American Republics of its sovereignty.

Thenceforward they announced their conviction, to which they still hold fast, that no promises of the Mexican Government, no legislative acts of the Mexican Congress, can provide them with conditions which they deem advantageous enough for their enterprise. They long sighed for the halcyon days of Don Porfirio when fear of Yankee intervention was the "fantasma" which moved the Mexican Executive to accord them all that they asked for. And as none of the "coming men" whom they flattered and disciplined and prepared for presidential duties contrived to reach the goal of his ambitions, they lost heart for a time but continued to keep a look-out for the "man of destiny" who would enable them to execute their design.

After a while—so the Mexican narrative runs—they joined forces with the enterprising politician in the United States who was believed to be conversant with every phase of Mexican affairs, in fact with most matters excepting the psychology of the people. Desirous of making a dent in the history of his country, this statesman drew up a programme in which he unfolded his own conceptions of the relations that should subsist between Mexico and the United States. It included the treaty which Mr. Hughes has since made his own, the abolition of certain articles of the Constitution, preferential treatment of Americans in commerce and industry, an arrangement which would virtually give to the State Department in Washington the rights and privileges of guardianship, a sort of Platt amendment for choice. And all that is now lacking to its realisation are the occasion and the Mexican man of destiny. The former would have been supplied by a revolution—it too failed to come off at the date fixed—or the perpetuation of Carranza's policy, and the latter by one of two types of President: a fanatical obstinate anti-Yankee or a subservient tool who would consent to see Mexico's needs eye-to-eye with the groups in question and to carry out its behests.

If Mexico is still a sovereign State to-day, it is because neither the occasion nor the man has been forthcoming. There is no revolution threatening. Peace and order have been reestablished. Reforms of every kind are being pressed forward. Business has revived to such an extent that in the month of May, 1921, only four countries bought more goods in the United States than Mexico, who imported more than all the countries of South America by nearly two million dollars. The Federal Army has been reduced from 105,000 to 77,000 men and by the autumn it will number only 50,000. Despite the defective condition of much of the railways' rolling stock the trains run almost on time and accidents are fewer in relation to the number of passengers than in France.

In this way the anticipated occasion was brilliantly warded off—and the realisation of the guardianship project which had reckoned with a totally different situation had to be postponed. The economic grievances wrongly ascribed to Article XXVII of the Constitution were next relied upon. Fears were expressed that oil properties would be confiscated. These apprehensions, however, were speedily dispelled first by President de la Huerta and then by President Obregón. The latter has solemnly promised to respect all property rights in the country and that Mexico's debts will be paid to the uttermost farthing and he has shown that he means what he said. But what was most resented in his public utterances was his determination to see that the people of Mexico, whose treasures have for ages been flowing ceaselessly into the coffers of strangers, shall have a fair share of what still remains in the soil.

In this way the ground was completely cut from under the feet of those restless foreign corporations which were pressing forward their scheme of readjustment. And Mexicans hoped and believed that with these dangers dislodged a complete and satisfactory understanding with the United States Government would be a mere matter of days or weeks. But the camel's nose was suddenly thrust into the Mexican tent and a treaty insisted upon as a condition antecedent to recognition—whereupon the hopes of the would-be ethical guardians revived, that the rest of the camel would shortly follow.

That the American people whose sense of fair play is almost proverbial approves this procedure is not believed by Mexicans who have resided in the United States. A noteworthy section of the American press expresses the same disbelief. Commenting on the admirable programme set forth by President Obregón in the *New York World,* that journal writes: "The Executive who stands for such a programme and the followers who uphold it are worthy of more consideration than is implied in demands from our State Department for immediate legislation defining constitutional provisions. The United States in assuming to dictate what laws Mexico shall pass does what it would not permit any foreign Power in its own case even to suggest. If there are interests in the United States that desire to postpone recognition in order to weaken the Obregón régime and prepare the way for a Government as amenable to outside discipline as was that of the Dictator Diaz, the continuing barrage of active Mexican propaganda may be easily understood."[3]

One can hardly blame the Mexicans for ascribing the various plots and outbreaks of the month of July—especially those the scene of which was the oil country—to that discontented element which alone would have profited by their success. Suspicion, we are assured, is borne out by tangible proof. If this be true, and a genuine plot is unmasked, one cannot affect surprise if those to whom the guilt is brought home, whoever they may be, are regarded by Mexicans as the most pestilent of their enemies. The day is not far distant when that evidence —if it exists—must be produced. The statement has been published by the Mexican press that at the conspirative meetings held by Robles Dominguez Cantu, Pablo Gonzalez and General Murghia, a representative of the oil companies from Washington was present.[4]

But for those things the Mexican mind was prepared. Hence although they might arouse resentment they could not awaken surprise. What stirred the people to the quick was the disillusion caused by Mr. Hughes' demand. They had built upon his sense of justice, his fervid honesty and his breadth of practical wisdom and were buoyed up with the hope that he would recognise the change that had taken place in Mexico, rate at its just value the work of social reconstruction which is going forward there and the readjustment of its relations with the United States, and would strike out a policy at once amicable, generous and congruous with these new and deciding facts. They still think highly of Mr. Hughes' motives but deem them more interesting to the biographer than to the historian and they feel strongly about his Mexican policy.

During the years that elapsed between the promulgation of the new Constitution and the overthrow of the Carranza régime,[5] all that was needed to put Mexico right with foreign States was the redemption of the plighted word of her President. And nothing would have been easier for her while Mr. Lansing was Secretary of State than to have settled on equitable and easy terms with her aggrieved neighbours; for the issues were then reduced to their narrowest compass and simplest forms, and even the oil companies might conceivably have been contented with strict justice. Why should anything more be exacted to-day? Every demand made by the State Department in Washington during those years of storm and distress has been acquiesced in by President Obregón and more. But the requirements of the Department have grown and been made to include a claim which amounts to an implicit denial of Mexico's sovereignty. To constrain a State to sign a treaty to which it has a rooted objection connotes a wholly new departure in international politics. And Mexico can hardly be expected to contribute to its establishment. It goes beyond the terms put forward by Mr. Lansing and rejected by Señor Carranza. It transcends the former demands of the oil companies and of other American investors. It is rooted in a wholly different soil. It is a new postulate, political in character, commensurate with Latin America in extent and cosmic in its bearings. In short, it is the foundation stone of the vast fabric which is destined to keep the world divided into a dual system of which one part would temporarily recognise the overlordship of the non-American peoples of English speech and the other the hegemony of the United States.

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[3] *New York World*, 28th June, 1921.

[4] See for example *El Heraldo de Mexico*, June 19th, 1921.

A formal treaty with Mexico did not become an official condition of settlement, still less of recognition, until Mr. Colby was appointed Secretary of State. And a treaty embodying what Mr. Fall termed "special agreements" and "recognition of the Monroe Doctrine" has, it appears, not been seriously contemplated at any time by the State Department. Even now Secretary Hughes has not formally adopted any portion of the Fall programme but one. The preamble of the scheme fathered by Mr. Fall gathers up the many rumours, facts, accusations and calumnies that lay scattered in the unfavourable judgments passed on Mexico for a number of years. His line of reasoning is simple. The Mexican governing class is pictured as devoid of the capacity for governing or building up. The nation which it impersonates is destructive by habit if not by nature and the political atmosphere in which it lives and works is mephitic. The bulk of the people, pillaged or neglected by the ruling group, has for generations been buffeted to and fro on the waves of misery and disease. Like the blind fish in certain cave-lakes one of its senses is atrophied. The whole Republic is in an advanced stage of decomposition. It recognises no moral, no legal restraint. Its plighted troth is worthless. To-day, therefore, do what they may, Obregón and his fellow workers cannot possibly reorganise and maintain it on a basis which would challenge and receive the approval of any righteous State. Mexico's only chance lies in securing the active and unremitting co-operation of the United States. And this co-operation should be given only on America's terms which include all the privileges of ethical, financial and economic guardianship. Hence the sole sheet anchor of salvation is for the Mexican President to bow to the inevitable and smooth the way for its reception by the people. This is at once his opportunity and his probationary ordeal. Patriotism and personal interest alike should prompt him to turn the turbid rill of Mexico's history into the mighty waters of America's destinies. His countrymen would then be admitted to a share in the boons enjoyed only by the most progressive race of the world. Bending is better than being broken. But if he be too high-spirited to play the leading part in thus patriotically knuckling down, then his greatness will entail disaster and may lead to his country's undoing.

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[5] 1917 and 1920.

It is fair to say that that is a practical corollary of the arbitrary premise that all Mexican promises and reforms are valueless. For if this be true it follows that, whether they are embodied in a bilateral treaty or a one-sided legislative or judicial act, they are not worth the paper on which they would be written. Any treaty under such circumstances would be valueless unless it conferred on the United States in Mexico as in Cuba the right of making its counsel heard and its power felt to countervail Mexican remissness.

Now Mr. Hughes' demand for a treaty antecedent to recognition is the first step towards the realisation of these designs, however little he may suspect it. In this sense one may regard it as a temporary substitute for the "occasion" which as we saw is recognised as an indispensable condition to the imposition of the new relationship between the United States and Mexico. And determined efforts have since been made by persons whose identity may possibly be revealed by the law courts before these lines have seen the light to create an "occasion" incomparably more auspicious and to champion the "man of destiny."[6]

As for the man fitted to play the primary rôle prepared for him in this political mystery play, he too has been found but like so many of his compeers he has not yet reached the footlights. His qualifications are not exorbitant: he must be weak by temperament, compliant by reflection and mentally vacuous enough to serve as the channel through which good advice from the North may uninterruptedly flow to the Government and population of the Mexican Republic. The framers of the project lost sight of the resolve of the Mexican people to lead its own life and work out its salvation in its own fashion and of the circumstance that it resents being made virtuous by act of Congress, parasitical by treaty or wealthy by proxy.

As military intervention has an ugly ring, it is now rigourously excluded from the vocabulary of the foreign junta which would fain save Mexico in spite of herself. Their plan is less simple and more specious. Having found a duly qualified President—and there is said to be one now impatiently waiting abroad—the *modus operandi* would be somewhat as follows: The President would first come to a secret understanding with the United States Government on the subject of the Constitution of 1917 and of the other concessions deemed indispensable to the establishment of stable friendly intercourse and would receive in return the promise of moral, financial and eventually military support and assistance in carrying out the concerted plan. The first step on the part of the State Department, after a definite refusal of recognition, would be a notice issued to the Mexican nation that the people of the United States would not war with them but would take effective measures to protect the lives and properties of foreigners. And as Mexico would be still without a recognised government it would send warships to Vera Cruz and "a police force consisting of the naval and military forces of our Government into the Republic of Mexico to open and maintain open every line of communication between the city of Mexico and every sea-port and every border-port of Mexico." This force once despatched, the compliant President, "acting in the highest interests of his country," would fulminate a fiery protest against the foreign invaders, denounce their incursion as a violation of international right and summon them to withdraw at once and permit the Mexican people to settle the matter without constraint and congruously with its interests and duties. Thereupon the foreign police force would be withdrawn in order to enable the Republic to reconsider its position. On this the President would issue a manifesto to the nation, deprecate the violation of its territory, point out that the menace was still hanging over its head and, in view of the material impossibility of successfully resisting the overwhelming force of the invader, would ask for extraordinary powers to accept the best conditions to be obtained. If these powers were accorded to him, he would employ them —always in the highest interests of the nation—for the purpose of concluding the secret compact already agreed upon. Should those powers be refused or should a rebellion break out at any stage of the proceedings the United States Government would step in to aid and abet the patriotic President by every means in its power, as it offered to aid and abet President Oreste Zamor of Haiti. The procedure is evidently stereotyped.

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[6] General Pelaez has publicly accused the agents of a certain oil company of supplying the rebel General Martinez Herrera with a large sum of money to enable him to overthrow the Obregón Government. See *The Mexican Post,* July 16th, 1921.

It is an instructive and illuminating detail that a firm belief was entertained by politicians and capitalists of note in the United States who currently pass for authorities on Mexican affairs that President Obregón would lend himself as chief actor to this international melodrama. On the psychological assumptions on which that belief was based and first-hand knowledge of which is now accessible, it would be unfruitful to dwell here. It may suffice to add that to any one who can truly claim acquaintanceship with General Obregón the supposition was preposterous. Fabricius in ancient Rome whose name has become a synonym for incorruptible patriotism and loyalty was not better panoplied against temptation and menace than is the President of the Mexican Republic.

Schemes of this nature which take it for granted that no good can come out of Nazareth have had their natural effect on the minds of Mexican statesmen. They see, as they think, clearly, the interests which are being tirelessly furthered in their country under various high-sounding names and they consider them irreconcilable with the complete independence of the Republic. Hence their sullen opposition to the insertion of what they look upon as the thin edge of the wedge, in the shape of a covenant of friendship to be imposed by sheer force.

But General Obregón does not make the unpardonable mistake of confounding certain interested groups in the neighbouring Republic with the bulk of the American people whom he sincerely admires and in whose unerring sense of justice he feels and displays implicit confidence. What he and his fellow workers desire is an opportunity to set before that people in its daily press the elements of the question at issue, the causes of the present misunderstanding, and his country's desire to live in genuine amity with that great nation, to profit by its example and to benefit by its friendly co-operation.

CHAPTER XVI

THE NEO-MONROE DOCTRINE

THERE can be little doubt that all the terms of recognition outlined by Mr. Fall in the report of the Senate Sub-Committee would have been imposed on Mexico, had the Revolution headed by General Obregón been quelled. For they were drawn up specially to meet a particular situation and to solve the problems to which it gave rise. And Cuban history leaves no doubt in our minds what the course of Mexico's affairs would then have been. As it chanced however the Mexican people was ripe for reform, rose up in arms and overthrew the system that was exposing it to that danger. Its leader inspired it with a growing passion for social justice which is fast bearing fruit and he implanted in the soul of the whole nation a sentiment of dignity and self-respect which will stand it in good stead during the work of reconstruction which has already begun. Every kind of outside pressure put upon the people under the new conditions will therefore operate as a potent irritant, and that the Mexicans should so regard the terms demanded of them as the price of recognition is neither surprising nor blameworthy.

With the overturn of Carranza's régime and the reversal of his policies the motive and justification of the Fall recommendations vanished and a new epoch was inaugurated. But the lack of preparation in the inelastic minds of North American politicians for this swift transformation and the strong influence of certain insatiable oil companies partially account for the tenacious clinging of the principal framer of the recommendations to what might aptly be designated the *magnum opus* of his public life. One can sympathise with a diligent worker who after a protracted period of strenuous toil, planning for the expansion of his own country at the expense of another and fancying he had devised a new and puissant agency for the reorganisation of the State systems of the world, beholds the outcome of his labour made valueless and void by the achievements of a citizen of the backward nation whose moral quality and political vision placed him all at once in the front rank of reforming statesmen. What Mr. Fall offered was a form of guardianship which would admit of the United States bringing up Mexico by hand. What General Obregón actually accomplished was to set his country on its legs and render it wholly independent of ethical, political and economic wardship. And one of the chief causes of the deplorable misunderstandings between the two republics to-day lies in the inability or slowness of the North American Government to realise that the necessity for the drastic remedial measures prescribed by the distinguished ex-Senator has disappeared. He is a poor surgeon who would insist on amputating a limb after it had recovered its pristine strength and flexibility. But there are such.

The roots of the matter, however, lie deeper than a mistake in political diagnosis and extend further than the boundaries of the Mexican Republic. They spread to all the lands of the American Continent south of the Rio Grande and may be labelled the Neo-Monroe Doctrine. Mr. Fall's suggestions, Mr. Hughes' condition of recognition, the various demands, strivings and protests of the foreign capitalists in Mexico are all so many tentacles of the doctrine of Monroe. And one of the indirect consequences of the World War which has stricken so many European powers with palsy is the creation of conditions exceptionally favourable to its resuscitation, growth and spread.

The friends of this elusive canon admit that it thrives on anarchy and confusion. And its enemies maintain that it produces the conditions on which it lives and thrives.

The Monroe Doctrine, long dormant and never authoritatively defined, is looked upon by easy-going Americans as an old-fashioned weapon of defence against Europe's long forgotten velleities of conquest by means of colonisation. And they consign it to the dusty archives rather than to the arsenal of effective political armaments. Those among them to whom current history is not a sealed book invoke good authority for their contention. For example, William Graham Sumner, the patriotic American, terms the doctrine a fetish and asks: "Does the United States intend to deny that the States of South America are independent States open to access by any other nations and liable to have any kind of friendly or unfriendly relations with European States such as any two independent States may have with each other?"[1] President Wilson answered that question in the following passage of a public speech: "It is none of my business . . . how long they (the Mexican people) take in determining what their Government should be. Their country is theirs. The Government is theirs. Have not European nations taken as long as they wanted, and spilt as much blood as they pleased, in settling their affairs? And shall we deny that to Mexico, because she is weak? No, I say."[2] That interpretation was as authoritative as any. And it reassured the States of Latin America whose peace of mind had been perturbed by the imperialistic utterances of responsible and irresponsible politicians. But President Wilson's successor implicitly puts a different construction on it, as indeed Mr. Wilson himself did in other declarations and acts of his. And yet Mexico and the sister Republics are expected, nay enjoined, by Mr. Fall to accept formally, solemnly and irrevocably what he is pleased to term the "Monroe Doctrine." Those Americans who complain that one Mexican President is apt to reverse the political maxims of his predecessor and go on a wholly new tack are the best qualified to comprehend the bewilderment of the Mexicans when faced by these contradictions and the fervour of their desire to be freed from the painful uncertainty now prevailing respecting the policies of successive administrations of the United States.

That lucid statement was not the only one given to the world by Mr. Wilson.

Incidentally that President dealt a stunning blow to the imperialist interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine when he announced that "all the governments of America stand, so far as we are concerned, upon a footing of genuine equality and unquestioned independence."[3] And Mexicans pertinently ask how they can satisfy the demands of the great Northern Republic if one of its Presidents contradicts or cancels the solemn utterances of his predecessor in a matter of such moment. And following the American demand for a treaty defining these reciprocal relations, they ask for an authoritative definition of the Monroe Doctrine.

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[1] *War and Other Essays,* by W. G. Sumner, p. 61.

[2] Speech delivered at Indianapolis on January 8th, 1915. In June of the same year the President struck a wholly different note, but that was ignored in Mexico City.

Mr. Sumner, commenting upon President Cleveland's reference to the doctrine, wrote: "He talks about the Monroe Doctrine and he tells us solemnly that it is true and sacred, whatever it is. He even undertakes to give some definition of what he means by it; but the definition which he gives binds nobody, either now or in the future, any more than what Monroe and Adams meant by it binds anybody now not to mean anything else."[4] In another passage the same author says: "If you want war, nourish a doctrine . . . it would ruin a doctrine to define it, because then it could be analysed, tested, criticised and verified; but nothing ought to be tolerated which cannot be so tested."[5] Accordingly the Monroe Doctrine has never been authoritatively defined. It is a blank cheque on which any sum may be written by the State Department in Washington. Hence Mexico refuses to sign it.

If the principle underlying those important pronouncements represented the policy of the United States Government, as might well be the case, seeing that President Wilson was as great an authority on the subject as President Monroe, the doctrine might decently be buried, for it would certainly be dead. But in the course of the World War this canon, quickened into fresh vitality by combination with a principle misnamed "manifest Destiny," has tacitly become the palladium of certain superior races who feel themselves charged with a providential mission to guide their lesser brethren and shoulder the "white man's precious burden." To-day therefore under the pressure of economic necessity the dogma and its gloss bid fair to crystallise into a political maxim which may be formulated thus: "If an inferior nation cannot or will not develop the natural resources of the country it inhabits, the superior race on the other side of its frontiers has the right and the duty to develop them and to take the inferior nation under its guidance."

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[3] Message to Congress, 7th December, 1915.

[4] *War and Other Essays,* by W. G. Sumner, p. 38.

[5] Op. cit. p. 36.

In effect certain progressive peoples are seriously reconsidering the accepted doctrines of democracy, progress and self-determination with a view to their amendment. Limitations have already been set upon these and upon various other forms of liberty. The State has begun to make weak-willed individuals virtuous by statute and from this to the reformation of weak-willed States by a neighbouring Superstate in the name of humanity and economics there is only a step and it looks as though it too would shortly be taken. Such is the trend of social thought to-day among those advanced nations who believe that their moral vision fits them for the work of discerning the needs of their backward neighbours and devising the ways and means of satisfying these. The functions of government are thus being stretched so as to cover part of the sphere formerly regulated by religion and the moral law.

This innovation looks like the prelude to a new altruistic move which will bring together in close contact the lion and the lamb, the hawk and the pheasant. And neither the lamb nor the pheasant like the prospect. It is generally considered an ill sign to see the fox manifest tenderness toward the lamb. This introduction of "morality" into international polity was applied at the Peace Conference in Paris in the shape of the system of mandates for such backward and wealthy lands as Mesopotamia, Persia and Syria, and it bids fair to leaven politics with this new type of international ethics in other regions and in a way never struck out before. It may become in the international sphere what prohibition is in the national. In the western hemisphere it was implicitly adopted by the versatile President Wilson when he wrote to Carranza: "I therefore call upon the leaders of Mexico to act. . . . If they cannot accommodate their differences and unite for this great purpose within a very short time, this Government will be constrained to decide what means should be employed by the United States in order to help Mexico save herself and serve her people."[6] Here we have the magic word fated to attract and crystallise the floating ideas and aspirations of the new era which have not yet been embodied in practical politics. Mexico must be helped to save herself. And yet her Government "stands upon a footing of genuine equality." President Roosevelt with whom I had the privilege of exchanging views on this subject upheld the same principle and looked to it for the solution of the Latin-American riddles. Publicly he laid it down[7] that "chronic wrong-doing or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilised society may in America as elsewhere ultimately require intervention by some civilised nation, *and in the western hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrong-doing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power.* It is a mere truism to say that every nation whether in America or elsewhere, which desires to maintain its freedom, its independence, must ultimately realise that the right of such independence cannot be separated from the responsibility of making good use of it." But who is the judge? The Power that is able and willing to employ force? And suppose its economic interest in intervening overbears its judgment, what then? Is there to be no appeal? Apparently not.

Now that would seem to be the accepted way of applying the enlarged Monroe Doctrine to-day on the principle that duty changes with conditions and rights expand commensurately with responsibilities. All that is further needed in order to reveal the concrete embodiment of the canon thus widened and raised to the status of a world-policy is to determine which are the nations thus qualified to intervene helpfully in the internal affairs of a restless neighbour, for the laudable purpose of raising barriers to the possible spread of anarchism and attuning progress there to the rhythm of the culture-bearing race. The necessity of instructing the executors of the Monroe Doctrine, who were already admittedly the protectors of a whole continent against foreign aggression, with the interpretation and maintenance of the basic principles of social stability and accepting them as moderators and mentors of backward American communities in matters of social, political and moral advancement, and of generalising this principle and extending this trust, is being slowly stamped into the political consciousness of the leaders of the English-speaking peoples throughout the world.

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[6] Note dated June 2nd, 1915.

[7] In his annual message to Congress in 1904.

At first sight it seems to be a maxim capable of working vast changes in the destinies of the human race by conjoining resolute will with overmastering power and quickening both with lofty ethical professions. But the student of history knows that world-wide policy, however mild and moral, invariably challenges world-wide resistance for it assumes what cannot be accepted universally—that all kinds of culture must give way to that of a single type. And this is especially true when the privileged form is believed to consist mainly in material well-being, mechanical morality and spiritual pretensions.

It is fair to add that in such a classification of nations the ethical values are necessarily relative. W. G. Sumner lays it down plainly that this doctrine is but "a glib and convenient means of giving an appearance of rationality to an exercise of superior force."[8] And it is impossible to gainsay the statement. He further avers that: "There is something hideous in the attitude of one community standing over another to see whether the latter is 'fit for self-government.' Is lynching or race rioting," he asks, "or negro burning, or a row in the legislature, or a strike with paralysed industry, or a disputed election, or a legislative deadlock, or the murder of a claimant official . . . or financial corruption and jobbery, proof of unfitness for self-government? If so, any State which was stronger than we might take away our self-government on the ground that we were unfit for it. It is, therefore, simply a question of *power,* like all the other alleged grounds of interference of one political body with another, such as humanity, sympathy, neighbourhood, internal anarchy, and so on."[9]

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[8] *Earth-Hunger and Other Essays,* by W. G. Sumner, p. 54.

This deliberate judgment of the eminent American sociologist is identical with that of serious Mexican politicians. They too feel and say that if Mexico were a country devoid of natural riches, no Great Power would worry much about its ethical or social advancement. They would look elsewhere for the white man's burden and first scrutinise its contents. "Some righteous folks," exclaimed a Mexican to me, "would be disappointed if there were no wealthy peoples backward or peccant enough to need salvation from without." The remark is true. None the less, it is refreshing to know that there are men who profess to lay greater store by the saving of their brother's soul than by the cut of his coat or the colour of his tie, and nations which think that they set a lower rate on their trade and industries in a foreign land than on the moral upbringing of its inhabitants.

But if a privileged race be qualified to sit in judgment on less progressive peoples, is it equally capable of deciding what is good for them? No one conversant with contemporary history can truly answer that query in the affirmative. As a whole the politico-social institutions of communities of English speech are passably good in themselves and in a rough way suit the peoples who elaborated them, because they have grown out of their needs and of their national and racial consciousness. But only a visionary would regard them as appropriate to all other nations and races. Neither the British conception of self-determination nor the North American interpretation of individual liberty will commend itself to France, Italy, or Japan. And as for the craze of imposing the institutions of either upon such backward communities as Persia or Mexico, it would be little less than a crime against humanity. Indeed it is no exaggeration to affirm that most of Mexico's tribulations are the direct outcome of her own foolish effort to model her political system upon that of the United States, and of the resolve of the United States Government to punish her for the results.

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[9] *War and Other Essays,* by W. G. Sumner, pp. 349-350.

None the less, the new canon, which might be termed the doctrine of ethical guardianship, may possibly be incorporated for a time among the unwritten laws of nations in the new era which has begun. Already at the Paris Conference it received, as we saw, the implicit assent of the greater and greedier States which profited by it considerably. They freely gave and took mandates to protect well-to-do wards—but fought shy of poor ones—on the ground that moral responsibility and guardianship are the correlates of political power and high moral standing. And in the near future wherever on the globe there happens to be a strong, thriving, order-loving, assimilating and progressive people and beside it a restless, backward, potentially wealthy, politically incohesive State, there will be a strong temptation to apply the principle.

Divested of its moral wrappages it is the doctrine of might. As General Obregón puts it: "The World War is obliging great nations to choose between force and justice and the little ones can escape from force only by submitting to justice."

Force decked out in the garb of ethics would seem to be the one fixed and immutable point in the various doctrines which still inspire Latin-Americans—"the inferior races"—with alarm. For what it connotes is the Anglo-Americanisation of the western hemisphere.

The North American politician who dwells in the high politico-spiritual latitudes of righteousness professes to regard Mexico as a huge decaying organism at the very doors of his country and proclaims that it has become a danger not merely to group interests or to legitimate political aims but also and especially to the normal progress of the world. And he refuses to inquire whether the germs of the decay were imported or nurtured by outside influences, as Mexicans assert, and deliberately cultivated by outside sordid interests. He takes the ground that the whole organism being tainted with gangrene, it is bootless to seek to heal this or that symptom. Of all Mexico's democratic institutions he denies that there is one which is real. Of all its avowed aspirations he perceives none that are attainable. Every native effort put forth to stay the moral, social and political dissolution which has played such havoc with the people he dismisses as nugatory. Riveting his gaze on the past, he is blind to the present and incredulous about the future. Hence, to his thinking, none of the functions of an organised community is being discharged, none of the objects of civilised society is being achieved: the State is without a Government, the people are devoid of guidance, misery stalks a country which abounds in all the resources necessary and adequate to material well-being. Relations between the governing and the governed, between this racial element of the population and that, between the judicial and the executive powers, between the States and the Federal Government, although defined by paper laws, are in perpetual flux and inextricable confusion. That such a diseased body should be left decomposing in the sun during a period of psychic epidemics is contrary to that common sense which is to be found in the soul of every man of Anglo-Saxon blood.

Such is the gist of the staple argument in favour of prompt action and drastic expedients. Official recognition of the Obregón administration will not silence or discourage those who rely upon it to-day. It is one of those obsessions or pretexts which are independent of the reasons advanced for holding it. Hence it is argument-proof.

A glance at the curious relationship which prevailed between the United States and the Diaz Government will enable the reader to perceive why the minds of the average North American investor and of the imperialistic politician are stereotyped against any form of future intercourse with Mexico further removed from overlordship than that.

It has been often termed "intervention by 'fantasma.'" Whenever the Dictator Diaz whose statecraft was but surface-deep desired to carry a measure he was wont to dangle before the eyes of the dissentient members of the Cabinet the menace of the United States' intervention. This sobering prospect which was always efficacious he playfully termed the "fantasma." The essence of his domestic and international policy was respect for property and for all that that implied. Many of his own friends and most of his adversaries admit that it was an exaggerated respect—a species of idolatry—and that some of the ways in which it was manifested were indefensible. It was founded, they alleged, on no higher principle than expediency and therefore was devoid of a solid basis. One might describe it as the quest of material prosperity for the benefit of the few. It was the thinnest of materialisms translated into politics and as such could not stand the test of time. It lost sight of the nobler aspirations of human beings and used the bulk of the population as a means to an end instead of treating them as the proper end of all governance. Indeed the paramount, nay the sole, interest which they had in the matter was to rise up in arms against it.

Diaz' statecraft was but a series of sorry expedients. It took hardly any account of distant bearings or interdependent relations. The Dictator contented himself with holding up to the imagination of his fellow-workers the "fantasma" of Yankee intervention and strove to burn into their minds the constant peril which Mexico ran of forfeiting her sovereign attributes if she failed to retain the good will of the United States by foregoing certain of those attributes spontaneously. That was the ever-present spectre which haunted the National Palace and the legislatures, frightened gainsayers of Diaz' policy and kept the Mexican ear open to the breeze of inspiration which blew steadily from the north side of the Rio Grande. Hence the alacrity with which foreigners' claims were satisfied, foreigners' complaints were listened to and foreigners' grievances were redressed. Even the Supreme Court itself was trained by the Dictator to shape its decisions in strict accordance with the requirements of this settled policy and to await his injunctions before pronouncing them. It is contended that on the whole in these law suits right was on the side of the foreigners, so that what the President violated was not so much essential justice as the mechanism by which it was administered and the respect in which it ought to have been held. But even admitting this, one cannot gainsay that he was sapping the foundations of the State.

The "fantasma" which silenced opposition and enforced unanimity is gone. Many outlanders hoped that General Obregón with an eye to his own interests if not to theirs would follow the Dictator's example. They can plead as their excuse that they did not know the character of the new President. Diaz was solicitous above all else about suppressing revolts, murders and other excesses, keeping the seamy side of Mexican life out of eyeshot and maintaining himself in power. But he only partly accomplished these objects and by practices which were ruthless. Sacrificing the lives and liberties of a section of his own people he pleaded in justification that by killing off a few he saved many. Possibly he did. But it is credibly alleged that the direct effects of this policy were to lay in the materials for the ten years of conflagration that began after his overthrow, to create an economic oligarchy of grasping foreign capitalists and to keep the Indian workers and the poorer classes of the population wretchedly paid, ill housed, ill fed and in a state of benighted ignorance.

The general character of Diaz' rule, which ignored the maxim that sheep may be shorn but not flayed, became widely known by its fruits, passable in the field of international finance and poisonous in the social and political spheres at home. Here is a mild sample of the consequences of the vicious economic arrangements in vogue. A highly intelligent non-political Mexican travelling in the Republic towards the close of the Diaz régime found conditions suggestive of those described by Arthur Young in France on the eve of the great Revolution. "I visited haciendas and factories," he said, "filled with workmen who toiled from sun-rise to sun-down for a few measures of beans, half a dozen bananas, a little sugar, coffee and bread. They were attired in the cheapest of cotton garments and slept on coarse mats spread on the earth. Heavily in debt to their masters they had no hope of ever freeing themselves from thraldom. They were taught to undergo their trials uncomplainingly, accepting them as immutable conditions of the cosmic scheme of things. In a Chiapas plantation I came across a large number of these hopeless toilers, Indians most of them, but to my great surprise there was one genuine Frenchman among them. This to me was a revelation. I questioned the interesting foreigner who wore the same kind of ragged garb as the natives and I ascertained that he had wandered to the place several years before and, being penniless and friendless, had taken work in the plantation, married an Indian girl who bore him several children, and continued to live there ever since. He had acquired the language of the tribe, had contracted, like his comrades, a debt which he could never hope to refund and was sullenly contented with his daily rations of food which included portions for his wife and children. He had no prospect of betterment, no expectation of innovation, except the exchange of his wretched hut for the grave.

"I rode away from the plantation heavy at heart meditating on the cheerless existence of these semi-human machines and their functions in the divine ordering of mundane things, when I came up with a strapping young fellow trudging along the road. With him I at once entered into conversation. For the by-ways of Chiapas were not encumbered with traffic nor frequented by travellers, and a meeting with a chance pedestrian was calculated to awaken all one's dormant social instincts. The wanderer who carried his property in a little bundle on his back informed me that he had come from afar and was on his way, I think, to Salina Cruz, where he hoped to find work. 'But surely you might have found work much nearer, in that plantation yonder, for example?' I remarked. 'Yes, I know,' he replied, 'but that kind of work is of no good to me. There is no money in it. All you get is your food and barely enough of that. And I am in quest of something else.' 'Of money?' I queried. 'Well, you see,' he replied, 'my father is employed on that plantation, has been there many years and he could give you a wrinkle or two about it. For him it is a life sentence in the galleys. He can never get out again if I don't help him and I am in search of work that will give me the money to buy him out. That is what I am looking for. Every mother's son of those workmen over there is laden with debts, debts they never fairly contracted and yet can never wipe out. For the money they owe they never received. That is the way the business is done. I am sorry for my poor father who should be resting at his time of life and I am going to ransom him if I can get a job that will bring me in a little money. I don't care how heavy the work is or how badly I fare myself. What I want is to buy the old man free and that is why I am going so far afield.' 'How much does your father owe?' The answer was fifty or sixty Mexican dollars. I would myself have given the lad the sum he needed if I could have afforded it, added my friend, "but my own spare cash was very limited. All I could do I did. I made him a present of nine Mexican pesos, and my reward was instantaneous. He embraced me. He shed tears of joy. He tendered me rapturous thanks which filled me with intense grief that I could not do more for him and with abiding gladness that I had sent a ray of hope to his aching soul."

When one contemplates the grinding, relentless spirit in which the natives of one of the richest countries in the world were thus beggared and crushed by the few who were living on the fat of the land and building up colossal fortunes, one may still deplore but one can hardly feel surprised at the mad attempts made by a section of the downtrodden people to annihilate the privileges and sources of power possessed by their taskmasters. Probably no such spectacle has been witnessed anywhere before. Mexico is an Eldorado. Its natural resources are incalculable. Even this very year it has produced sixty per cent of all the world's output of silver. It is capable of maintaining a population of a hundred million people instead of the fifteen or sixteen millions, mostly lack-alls, living from hand to mouth. To watch the stream of riches flow smoothly by into foreign channels without benefiting the bulk of the natives that own it, is a constant provocation to lawlessness, the force of which is realised only by those who experience it.

When the opportunity at last arrived and the revolution broke out it was expected that a new and improved state of affairs would at once ensue. But these hopes have been shattered. By whom? Mexicans unhesitatingly answer: "By those very groups which have accumulated wealth at our expense and are using it to our detriment." If the economic resuscitation of the country has not yet been realised, if foreign capital keeps aloof, if the foreign politicians and industrial corporations have erected a Chinese wall around the country in the hope of reducing it to subjection, is it fair, is it humane, to taunt Mexico with its shattered finances, its defective transport system, its halting internal reforms?

The would-be foreign masters of the country still look back wistfully towards the fantasma of the Diaz régime and are hopefully striving to substitute for that another and more durable method of exerting a predominant influence over the Republic. As this innovation is "Cubanisation," it is a matter for surprise among Mexicans that so little heed has been paid to this aspect of the subject seeing that if embodied in the concrete proposal which emanates from Mr. Fall it would thrill with emotion all the peoples of Latin-America.

When the demon of terror—the fantasma—was exorcised and together with it the ready consideration vanished which had theretofore been bestowed upon every expressed or implied wish of the northern Mentor, the foreign groups turned their attention to the filling of this gap. And the execution of this scheme is regarded as an essential condition of satisfactory relationship between the two Republics. It would seem as though nothing else, not even a treaty guaranteeing the effective protection of life and property, the payment of the national debt and the return of the railways, will be regarded by the self-constituted saviours of Mexico as an adequate substitute for the threatening shadow which Mexican officials under the Diaz régime carried in their hearts even under the brightest sunshine.

That is the crux of the situation to-day. To ignore it is to operate with misconceptions and to waste time on bootless endeavours. Mexico is now being summoned to fulfil certain international obligations, the binding force of which cannot be called in question. Her official spokesman acknowledges the duty and is prepared to discharge it. The obstacles in his way come from the United States and are wholly artificial. If the leading men in the southern Republic have, as behooved them, ascertained the true leanings of their foreign colleagues' minds they must feel that such international commitments as payment of interest on the national debt constitute but the merest fringe of the matter and that the problem which is being gradually pressed forward as essential, though it has not yet been officially formulated, may be described as the establishment of such relations as will render the Mexican Government, irrespective of the party which may chance to be in power, permanently and readily accessible to whatever counsel the United States as ethical Mentor and self-constituted friend may feel prompted to vouchsafe. Diaz' expedient of the fantasma was accepted as satisfactory so long as its author's tenure of office lasted. But what is demanded to-day by many of those who are engaged in moulding public opinion in the United States is a stable arrangement which will outlive presidents and revolutions, commit the country for all time and warrant the State Department in Washington, to offer, and if need be press, its services upon its weak neighbour. Haiti is the model.

An exhaustive discussion of the motives of this striving is beyond the scope of the present study. The writer's only contention is that it is a factor which ought to be fully covered by the surveys made of the international situation by those whose duty it is to keep a sharp look-out and recommend or adopt such measures as are called for. It would be a lack of candour on his part to pass over this far-reaching issue in silence or without due stress. For however completely Mexico may meet her present obligations the unavowed issue, which has not yet been clearly mooted, is certain to crop up in unfamiliar shapes, at times with vexatious accompaniments and possibly sinister consequences until it finally stands out without wrappage or disguise as a corollary of the latter-day doctrine sketched above, of the ethical guardianship of the superior political organism over the inferior.

No arrangement less far-reaching than that can be expected to satisfy the aspirations of the money-seeking American groups which are bent on "saving" the southern Republic. And Mexico, it may be added, feels that in this connection she stands for all Latin-America. This was one of the few issues of the international enigma which Carranza, short-sighted though he was in most other matters, thoroughly mastered and clumsily strove to tackle. His sole claim to political vision reposed upon his correct reading of that phenomenon. And his dismal failure was due to the fatuous expedients with which he encountered it.

A line of action becomes a policy only if it extend to far-off aims. And the attainment of these invariably requires labour, skill, time and the frequent readjustment of tactics to shifting conditions. Carranza devised such a rounded policy: he undertook not merely to liberate all Central America from the guardianship of the northern Mentor, but further to create a sort of lesser Monroe Doctrine there for the behoof of Latin-America without reference to the North American Republic. And he might as well have dipped a sieve into the ocean in the hope of catching the stars.

Immunity from unwelcome guardianship was guaranteed by President Wilson when he laid it down in his message to Congress that the "governments of America stand, so far as we are concerned, upon a footing of genuine equality and unquestioned independence."[10] This pronouncement, had it been final, was the utmost that any central or south American Republic could reasonably demand or expect. To set about improving it and propounding a brand new Latin-American Doctrine on the very lines of the one which aroused Mexico's resentment, and in open defiance of the great northern Republic, was an enterprise which gives one the true measure of Carranza's political acumen. If, moved by the desire to preserve all that appears worth preserving in their national or racial customs, institutions and strivings as well as their independence and language, the Latin-American Republics could band themselves together for the attainment of these legitimate objects and for friendly emulation with the great people of the United States, they would have made as much headway as is possible or desirable in the direction struck out by Carranza.

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[10] Message to Congress, December 7th, 1915.

CHAPTER XVII

MR. FALL'S MEXICAN PROGRAMME

MEXICO'S international situation, apparently complex, is in reality superlatively simple. The primary causes of the seeming complications are the predominance of foreign capital in the country and its deliberately perturbing influence on Mexican politics. Every domestic problem, whether it be agrarian, labour, financial or constitutional, affects in some degree the outlander who thereupon complains, protests or petitions his Government for political help. And the recognised spokesman of all foreign Governments and citizens whatsoever their nationality is the State Department in Washington, which automatically translates every such complaint and petition into terms of politics and therefore of strictly national interests. Thus far has economic interpenetration of the Tsarist type forged ahead in the Southern Republic. All the capitalistic interests now spread over Mexico have been gradually compacted into a vast political lever which the United States Government is free to handle as it lists. Since the day[1] on which the British Foreign Office announced that it would take no steps in connection with the Mexican situation without previously consulting the United States Government[2] and followed up this announcement by requesting that Government to investigate the murder of the British subject, Benton, the State Department may be said to have had a free hand in Latin-America. And one cannot be blind to the fact that the policy which it has steadfastly pursued ever since bears all the characteristic features of intervention. Mexico's international relations, in a word, have been lowered to the level of the vassal State of Rajputana or of Afghanistan and all that is still lacking is a suitable formula to be recognised by international law.

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[1] October 27, 1913.
[2] February 22, 1914.

To-day the Mexican Republic stands alone. Those European Governments whose nationals possess interests there have bartered these for the good will of the United States in other parts of the world. The hopes of Mexicans that a certain equilibrium of foreign strivings might be effected by methods akin to those inaugurated by Limantour were discouraged after the advent of Madero to power and have been totally shattered since the World War.

Limantour was one of the first to realise that the economic expansion of the English-speaking element in Mexico tended directly towards the political subjection of that country to the United States, and by way of thwarting or staving off this consummation he encouraged English, French and German capital to seek investments in the Republic by the offer of particularly favourable conditions. It was under his auspices and with these attractions in prospect that Lord Cowdray took over important contracts for improving the ports of Vera Cruz, Tampico and Salina Cruz, and it was to the same set of conditions that French capital owed its predominance in banking over that of other nations. That economic interpenetration which Limantour dreaded with all that it implies has since come to pass without evoking a word or a sign from apathetic Europe. And yet there was a moment when European diplomacy awoke from its lethargic sleep and a sudden transient impulse among the members of the diplomatic corps in the Mexican capital lent colour to the belief that a joint telegram was about to be despatched by them to their respective Governments to the effect that the attitude of the United States toward Mexico was manifestly contributing to revolutionary movements. But that opportunity lapsed unutilised and there is now no Power but the United States ready to press with steady energy in the direction in which its economic interests and its politico-humanitarian aims are being systematically countered.

The simple character of the issue between the United States and Mexico may be gathered from the trend of almost every step taken by the former country since the disappearance of Porfirio Diaz from the political stage. The ground taken by the former country may aptly be formulated as follows: As citizens of the United States have paramount interests in Mexico, the State Department is resolved to enforce such internal conditions as will enable them to further those interests most advantageously. It is concerned only with its own citizens. And with this object in view it will present such proposals as it deems conducive to its attainment, and will enforce their acceptance by the most efficacious methods, appealing for its sanction not to the musty canons of international law but to "regional" agreements and the privileges of ethical guardianship.

That was the attitude, that the maxim, of the Administration which refused to treat Victoriano Huerta as President, despite the recognition accorded to him by all other nations and the despatch of autograph letters from several European sovereigns welcoming his régime in cordial terms. And the refusal of recognition was followed by injunctions to the Mexican people respecting their choice of a chief of State. This was a striking instance of what Mexicans term the exercise of obstructive power which destroys all security for internal organisation and opens the Mexican Republic to the uncongenial and erratic methods of North American politicians. And against that evil there was no counterforce. Neither is there any at present, unless it be the moral support of the civilised world to which President Obregón silently but suasively appeals.

It is easy to-day, and it was not difficult then, to perceive the moral drawbacks of Huerta's triumph or the sinister elements which he imported into the Government of the Republic. And nobody would be less disposed than the present writer to utter a word in favour of the usurper. But the case was one for Mexicans alone to deal with. It was for them to pass judgment on his person and his misdeeds. And under Obregón they rose up and with angry passion and firm resolve in their hearts cleansed the country of the taint with which he had striven to tarnish it.

President Wilson's moral scruples on the subject of Huerta doubtless do him credit. His intentions too were, one must assume, admirable. But the foreign polity of a great people cannot be usefully carried on by mere scruples and intentions. Nor is that all. Even those admirers of Mr. Wilson who approve that particular act must admit that it is wholly out of keeping with other moves of his and also with the measures and utterances of his successor. Mr. Wilson postulated as President of Mexico a man of acknowledged integrity of mind whose egotistic impulses and leanings would be overborne by considerations of morality—in a word, a man who might be weighed in his own home-made scales and not found wanting. Mr. Hughes, on the other hand, is understood to be ready to recognise any Mexican Government whatsoever provided that it will sign his pet treaty and bow to the god of private property. It is obvious that to glaring inconsistencies such as these the ill-starred Mexican Government finds it difficult to attune itself. To have to harmonise its policy, its laws, its customs and its Constitution now to a Republican, now to a Democratic standard—for that is what it comes to—is an unenviable task and a dangerous ordeal. The Mexican Constitution of 1917 was not objected to by Mr. Lansing, who merely refused to brook confiscatory acts whatever their motive or sanction. Mr. Colby went a step further, and the climax was reached by Mr. Hughes, who insists on a preliminary treaty entailing a breach of the Mexican Constitution and of the President's solemn oath to respect it. And the incongruity of the situation is such that any unscrupulous Mexican who would sell his conscience and his country for the presidential arm-chair in the Palacio Nacional—one of those self-seeking recreants whom Mr. Wilson would have excommunicated and whom the Mexican people would condemn to death—would be entitled to recognition at the hands of the United States Government to-day, while the man who may be described as Mexico's conscience, who occupies with credit and success the first post in the Republic and whose policy is founded upon justice, is curtly told that he cannot be recognised unless and until he commits acts which he and his fellow-countrymen regard as unpatriotic, immoral and criminal.

It would be unfruitful to pass in review the numerous inconsistencies which have coloured the quick-changing Mexican policies of the State Department in Washington during the past ten years. But one cannot affect surprise at Mexicans' belief that the constant menace to peace in their Republic since the fall of Diaz has had its principal source and centre in the United States. This conclusion which they support by a forcible array of historical facts nowise implies a reflection on the American people, any more than does the world-wide censure evoked by the high-handed methods pursued by certain American elements in Santo Domingo and Haiti. For it is not to be supposed that the American nation as a whole countenances every political stroke of its State Department or that the State Department applauds all the underhand machinations and propaganda tactics of those plutocratic groups and dim political figures who seek to sway its policy or to force its hand. The process which really takes place resembles, as we saw, that by which impressions made by outer objects on the senses are transformed into ideas. One has but to recall the recent course of events in Colombia, Haiti and Santo Domingo to realise how it comes to pass that the great democratic nation suddenly finds itself far ahead of its competitors in snug economic or favoured political situations without having craved them and as a result of aberrant manœuvres which it never would have deliberately sanctioned. And it is gall and wormwood to Latin-Americans that they should be expected while paying the price of these acquisitions to join in the pæans that are being chaunted to the altruism of the great and generous American nation.

One may sincerely congratulate the United States on its many grandiose achievements in the commercial and industrial spheres without approving all the devices by which it has risen to its present commanding position in the world or belauding its attitude towards Latin-Americans generally and Central Americans in particular. It requires a heroic effort, for example, to ascribe to ardent zeal for human improvement or to any other altruistic aim the measures which Mr. Fall in his Report to the United States Senate desired to see adopted by his Government towards Mexico. One is hardly able even to conceive the nexus between them and what is still recognised as common justice and equity. To the unbiased mind the aim underlying them looks uncommonly like imperialism of the kind which United States soldiers heroically fought and died to eradicate.

No one accustomed to scrutinise carefully the records of international politics will find it feasible to associate Mr. Fall's Mexican Programme or Mr. Hughes' condition for recognition with disinterestedness, justice or even legitimate self-defence. They deliberately ignore the accepted rules, precedents and comity of international intercourse. Take for example Mr. Fall's demand for a clause in the projected treaty to the following effect: "Article 130 of the Constitution of 1917 shall not apply to American missionaries, preachers, ministers, teachers or American schools, nor to American periodicals, but American missionaries, ministers and teachers shall be allowed freely to enter, pass through and reside in Mexico, there to freely reside, preach, teach and write and hold property and conduct schools without interference by the authorities so long as such ministers, teachers or missionaries do not participate in Mexican politics or revolutions."

"This clause of the Constitution," we are told, "provides that no one except a Mexican by birth, may be a minister of any religious creed in Mexico; that neither in public or private shall such minister criticise the fundamental laws of the country, the authorities in particular or the Government in general.

"That no periodical of a religious character shall comment upon any political affairs of the Nation, nor publish any information regarding the acts of the authorities or of private individuals in so far as the latter have to do with public affairs.

"That ministers are incapable legally of inheriting by will from ministers of the same creed, or from any private individuals to whom they are not related by blood within the fourth degree, etc."[3]

And "that Article 3 (prohibiting any minister or religious corporation establishing or directing schools of primary instruction) shall not apply to any American teaching or conducting primary schools."[4]

This same article further decrees that "the State legislatures shall have the exclusive power of determining the maximum number of ministers of religious creeds, according to the needs of each locality." To one accustomed, as I have been, to see a much larger measure of liberty conferred upon ecclesiastical institutions and their judgment on such matters as the maximum number of ministers accepted as final, this limitation appears excessive. To me it seems unquestionable that liberty to practise their religious rites includes, or under normal conditions ought as a matter of logic and expediency to include, the right of determining the number of its ministers, but I cannot conscientiously say that this principle has been followed or recognised by every civilised State or that its denial amounts to, or has ever been treated as, a violation of *international* law. What Mexico is doing in this respect is what other States have done in virtue of their sovereignty. And that being so, it is a curtailment of Mexico's sovereignty for a foreign State to insist upon its abrogation.

Another provision of the same Article reads: "Only a Mexican by birth may be a minister of any religious creed in Mexico," and the demand is made by Mr. Fall and his friends for its repeal, at least to the extent that it "shall not apply to American missionaries, preachers, ministers, teachers or American schools." There is no doubt that the steady and resistless tendencies of the age run counter to such restrictions as that in countries where the relations between Church and State are normal. Intolerance towards any form of religious worship as such is an anachronism to-day. And personally I disagree with those who, like M. Emile Combes, introduced the anti-clerical measure in virtue of which Frenchmen and foreigners alike were taken by force from their monasteries, friaries, convents and houses and expelled, solely because they were members of religious congregations. But the Republic, as M. Combes assured me, was well within its rights, and his prophecy that no Government would protest was duly fulfilled. Now it should not be forgotten that among those who were thus forbidden to carry out their religious duties and were compelled to thus quit French soil and had to spend the remainder of their lives beyond the French borders were numerous foreigners, including Americans, Italians, British, Russians and others. Sisters of Mercy too, whose self-denying activities challenged and received the grateful acknowledgment of the entire world, were among the victims of Combes' Draconian laws. In almost every country public sympathy was on the side of a considerable section of the forbidden congregations. But no State—not one—arrogated to itself the right of intervening or even protesting. The enactments were recognised as coming within the domain of domestic legislation and therefore beyond the purview of international law.

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[3] See Sub-Committee Print. Senate, 66th Congress, 2nd Session. Affairs in Mexico, page 61 and following.

[4] See the same Report, p. 62.

Again, in Tsarist Russia not only was a foreign clergyman not permitted to discharge the functions of a minister of religion,[5] but he was absolutely debarred from crossing the Russian frontiers under pain of immediate imprisonment. And several cases of summary punishment inflicted on foreign clergymen who violated this prohibition came to my notice. On two occasions I myself obtained special permission for the visit of a school-fellow of mine, and once his character was detected by a member of another church and he would have been arrested by the police had he not had his permit with him. Moreover, if a dissenting clergyman of Russian nationality ventured to convert or preach to a member of the Orthodox faith or administer a sacrament to such or receive him into any Christian or other Church, he was liable to severe punishment—either imprisonment or banishment to Siberia—which was invariably inflicted. Foreigners who married members of the Orthodox Church were not permitted to baptise or bring up their children in their own faith. And yet no Government ever intervened or protested. The grounds for this forbearance were the acknowledged right of a Sovereign State to legislate on all such matters according to what it considers to be the requirements of the nation or its good. The questions of expediency, of morality, of rational liberty, stand of course upon a different footing from the political and are governed by quite another set of considerations, but they leave intact the international law which accords to sovereign communities the faculty of dealing with all such subjects as they may think fit. And it is with this only that we are now concerned.

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[5] An exception was made in favour of three Dominican priests in the capital who were permitted to serve the *foreign* residents but not to preach in the language of the country, *nor to convert the natives.*

In Mexico the relations between Church and State are adjudged to be abnormal. Mexicans who, like Señor Vera Estañol, are opposed to the rigorous anti-clerical laws at present in force in their country admit that the Catholic clergy there stand on a different footing towards the nation from that which it occupies in the United States, Great Britain or Belgium. It is a historic fact, he says, that it was the members of that body who successfully intrigued and negotiated for the invasion of the Republic in 1863. And at a much more recent date, writes Señor Estañol: "Taking advantage of the fact that the Constitution of 1857 did not expressly forbid religious institutions as such to organise into political parties, the Catholic Church, immediately after the revolution of Madero, formed the 'Catholic Party,' with a view to taking part in the elections of 1912. The party was supported by the clergy. All, from the highest to the lowest, availed themselves of religious offices, the confessional, the pulpit, doctrine, dogma, faith, superstition, and all the instruments at hand to gain proselytes. They worked on the consciences of the people, their friends and their servants, using the formidable argument of eternal salvation, and when the ballot boxes were installed they placed about them standards bearing significant legends. On many of them, for example, were inscribed the words: 'Here you vote for God.' The Catholic Church thus attempted in this way to convert itself into a temporal power in rivalry to the State; it endeavoured to re-establish the theocratic régime of the middle ages." [6]

The wounds thus inflicted on the nation have, therefore, not yet had time to cicatrise and one can understand without approving the animus which still subsists among the representatives of the nation towards the ministers of the Church. Add to this the aggravating circumstance that the supposed candidate of the latter for the presidency of the Republic was a man who strove to rise to this position by the help of an official representative of the United States and whose unpopularity was and is as intense as it seems warranted.

The Catholic faith is professed by the great bulk of the Mexican people. In some places, it is true, especially among Indian tribes, its rites and ceremonies have become associated with superstitions, illusions and various kinds of survivals of the indigenous religion,[7] but the solemn liturgy of the Catholic Church fits in better with the ingrained love of form, pomp, ceremony and symbolism which marks all classes of the people than the cold, cheerless worship of the dissenting bodies. Mexicans feel, therefore, that while the work of converting idolaters to Christianity may be meritorious from a Christian, and possibly also from a humanitarian, viewpoint, the attempts to lure pious Catholics from their own denomination to another by stigmatising the former as a source of idolatrous errors is from every standpoint, including the Christian, reprehensible. And for that among other reasons it is keenly resented. When, therefore, well-meaning citizens of a foreign nation arrive to enjoy the hospitality of a country for the purpose of effecting a breach and creating dissent and dissension among its inhabitants by turning some of them against the faith of their fathers, it is natural that an influential body of the people should look askance upon the crusaders while admitting that they are prompted by the humanest intentions, and that the Government, however cordially it might sympathise with free religious discussion in principle, should hesitate as a matter of expediency to encourage the militant Christian apostles by conferring on them extraordinary privileges. It was on this and cognate grounds that Tsarist Russia kept out all religious proselytisers and that Austria systematically discouraged them. These motives acquire a noteworthy increase of momentum when, as in the case of Mexico, whose peoples have been long kept divided from each other and are only now being compacted in one homogeneous nation by General Obregón, religion and language happen to be among the main elements that cement their inchoate union. Intellectually and morally too this aggressive religious spirit, owing to the fierce controversies which it engenders, is at times a potent force in throwing veracity, honesty and fraternity into the background. Nowhere are the religious emotions and beliefs less independent of the traditional social surroundings with which history has associated them than in countries like Mexico, where the bulk of the people is unsophisticated and incapable of applying its reason to discussions of dogma and liturgy. Whatever else may be predicated of the pious Mexican Catholic, it cannot be gainsaid that his attachment to his creed—which generally underlies his respect for political authority—has its source in a yearning for a higher and better life and a disinterested striving to attain that.

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[6] *Carranza and His Bolshevik Régime,* by J. Vera Estañol, pp. 24-25.

[7] The venerable Archbishop of Mexico in a pastoral letter recently condemned several superstitious practices such as the picturesque Monday pilgrimages to the town in which St. Nicholas of Bari is venerated, the habit of setting the image of St. Anthony on its head and hiding it in a sequestered spot in the house with the object of finding stolen property and the burning of three tallow candles on a triangular brick before which ladies desirous of retaining or regaining the love of their husbands or bridegrooms pray for half an hour, and various others. See *El Universal,* September 20th, 1920.

There is, however, another side to all this which is commonly lost sight of. The American dissenting minister is not merely a fisher for souls. He is at the same time by the force of things and without deliberate effort on his part a political missionary. He cannot be less. His schools and other various institutions for the young of both sexes, in Mexico as in the United States, are seminaries in which the subtle elements that make up a child's outlook on the world are compacted into a whole and to that extent they are political also.

It is impossible that they should wholly fail to be that. And the results are alleged to be generally associated with a marked lessening of respect for, and attachment to, native institutions. It is Christianity minus Catholicism and plus Americanism. One might term the system indirect propaganda for the "higher civilisation" as against the "lower." In China too there are excellent American schools which turn out Americanised Chinamen who look down upon their own traditions, religions and philosophies, receive positions of trust in various branches of the Administration and doubtless justify the confidence placed in them by their superiors. But these officials are almost all pro-American in politics, look to the United States for guidance as well as help and are said to constitute a dissolvent force in the national organism. In Macedonia before the war a like phenomenon confronted the visitor at every hand's turn. The Macedonians speak a dialect which is partly Serb and partly Bulgar, so that even expert philologists could never be sure to which of the two ethnic branches the population really belonged. In every case it was the clergyman or the schoolmaster who decided the question practically. Wherever there was a Bulgar school, subsidised by the Government at Sofia, the scholars, their parents and the entire neighbourhood were Bulgars. If the priest and the teacher chanced to be Serbs, paid by the Belgrade Government, the people who resided in the district of which the Church and the school were the centre eagerly claimed Serb nationality. Hence the keen competition of both these Governments for Turkish permits to open schools and churches of their respective creeds and tongues and nationalities.

Now if there is one thing more than another of which Mexicans stand in need to-day it is institutions capable of strengthening their nationality, already weakened by the steady inroad of American customs, business methods, cinemas, journalism and coinage. There is hardly enough religion in the country to support several competing denominations. Everything that tends to loosen the ties of nationality they believe to be a danger, even though it be attended with undoubted material advantages, because it deadens and ultimately kills the soul of the people. And President Obregón personally realises this as thoroughly as any of his fellow-countrymen.

To bestow upon foreigners, therefore, the right of increasing at will the number of lines of cleavage which already keep Mexicans apart is decidedly and necessarily unpopular. But when such a demand is put forth as a special right of North Americans and is to be accompanied with certain privileges legally denied to Mexicans, the consequences are bound to be untoward. For the foreigner is asking for a lever which cannot be pressed without shaking the foundations of the social and political fabric. It is not, therefore, the Constitution which will generate discontent and feuds, but such exceptions to it as these which Mr. Fall and his influential supporters are insisting upon introducing.

Such is the light in which many Mexicans envisage this unprecedented demand. In France and Russia no such claims have ever been advanced by any of the Governments interested in the attainment by their nationals of religious freedom. The foreigners were told by their respective Governments to obey the law. If international law or custom had given them a pretext however frail for claiming such a far-ranging license, they would have utilised it without hesitation or delay. As an act of courtesy the Governments of both those States accorded permission to a few foreign clergymen of the Catholic Church to preach to, and hear the confessions of, the personnel of the diplomatic corps and the foreign residents and in their respective tongues which are not those of the people, but forbade them under severe penalties to preach or administer sacraments to the natives. And if Mexico be summoned to make more far-reaching concessions it can only be, her statesmen argue, because her sovereignty is not recognised by the United States to the full extent and that a new and western version of international law is being developed by means of freshly established precedents, of which the Central as the weaker States of the new Continent are to be the first victims. This conclusion seems incontrovertible. Undue pressure is undoubtedly being employed to obtain a privilege, the obvious effect of which would be to impair the international status of Mexico and establish claims which have no parallel in the history of intercourse among nations. In plain terms the contention is being implicitly advanced that there are two types of political communities on the new Continent to-day, the sovereign and the semi-sovereign, and that the United States alone belongs to the former. This would seem to be the real issue as revealed in the demand for special proselytising privileges for the various dissenting bodies of that Republic.

Another aspect of this unprecedented claim is revealed by its effects on the domestic policy of the country. Everybody understands that to grant to foreign clergymen, however lofty their purpose, the faculty to do in Mexico what the natives are debarred by law from doing would be to provoke a deplorable conflict between the latter and the lawfully constituted Government. It would be an indirect incitement to such unmeasured opposition as has hitherto been customary in the country. And in Mexico that is rebellion. In this case it would be rebellion with a good cause backed up by encouragement and moral help, to be followed possibly by military aid, from outside. In a word, it might well become a modification in non-essentials of the foreign intervention of 1863. In that year it was chiefly the Mexican Catholic clergy who desired and brought about the invasion of the country by foreigners and undertook to support it by a native rebellion. To-day it is a foreign Government which, doubtless with excellent intentions but defective data and warped judgment, would be preparing the soil for a rebellion and civil war of the worst kind by exacting privileges for its nationals which the Mexican State withholds from its own citizens. From whatever angle of vision, therefore, one contemplates the matter, it is tantamount to interference with the domestic policy of a sovereign State. The Government of the Republic of Mexico is constrained by this demand to choose between the two horns of a ruinous dilemma. By compliance it would antagonise a powerful body of opinion at home and spread discontent throughout the land; and by refusal it would provoke the enmity of a neighbouring Government which is now qualifying for the "rightful leadership among the sovereign nations of the world." [8]

Another of the recommendations made by Mr. Fall's Sub-Committee reads as follows: "That article 33 of said constitution, providing that 'The Executive shall have the exclusive right to expel from the Republic forthwith and without judicial process any foreigner whose presence he may deem inexpedient,' shall not apply to American citizens who shall, when they so demand, have access to their consulate or consular agent or diplomatic representative and have the right to avail themselves of the assistance of such officials, and until after due judicial proceedings upon application of such American."

This demand, in perfect keeping with the foregoing, is no less exorbitant than those. From none of the sovereign States of the world has it ever been preferred, for the conclusive reason that there is no international law, no international precedent, which can be appealed to in its favour. It is wholly arbitrary and amounts to an encroachment on the sovereign rights of the Mexican State. The only grounds which American politicians can adduce in support of it is that the United States has adopted trial before deportation. That was the result of an act of its sovereign will. It is free to repeal that procedure to-morrow and no foreign State would be warranted in uttering a protest or complaint. Why then should Mexico be forced against her will to follow the example of her powerful neighbour? In virtue of what general principle? Is it that Mexico must be guided by the United States in her domestic legislation and deprived of the exercise of her sovereign rights? If not, there is no argument that will bear scrutiny.

Will it be maintained that Mexico must not be allowed to do what France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Russia and Austria have done and still do without provoking the faintest protest from the United States? Is there to be a special international law created for Central America, a law restrictive in its character and different from that of other nations? And if so, what right can one invoke in support of the contention?

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[8] President Harding's words uttered in his address to the District of Columbia Bankers' Association on April 26th. Cf. *New York Times*, April 27th, 1921.

The Mexican Government will continue to treat all foreign citizens whose presence in the Republic is undesirable as the French democratic Republic treats them, and in doing so reckons upon the courteous forbearance of the civilised world.

In France and other countries a foreign citizen whose presence in the land is deemed harmful can be deported without trial. As recently as the year 1919 a well-known and highly respected British subject named Dell, who had lived several years in France, was the correspondent of the great English newspaper *The Manchester Guardian,* and had frequently testified his affection for that country, was expelled. And he was not given a trial. Nobody in England, however, asked for a repeal of that French law. Nobody protested because he was expelled without trial.

Before the war several foreign correspondents were expelled from France in the same summary manner. Among them was Herr Frischauer, correspondent of the Vienna journal *Neue Freie Presse.* It was a matter of common knowledge that this measure was adopted under a mistaken assumption. Herr Frischauer was a friend of M. Clemenceau. And yet the persons expelled were not allowed to return for some years and only when their influential French friends had interceded for them and shown that they had done nothing whatever to merit expulsion. Frischauer was received back with open arms by Clemenceau, with whom he was on intimate terms. As lately as September 1921 a renowned scholar of the highest character, a foreigner against whom nothing reprehensible has ever been alleged and in whose favour the British press has uplifted its voice, was expelled from England together with his wife without any explanation. One of the principal evening journals of London writes: "We published yesterday a letter from Dr. Oscar Levy, the well-known editor of the English edition of the works of Nietzsche, in which he stated that he and his wife are being expelled from this country by the Home Office, which derives this power of expulsion from the Aliens Restriction Act of 1919. We protested strongly against the general principles of that measure when it was passing through Parliament, for we regarded it as contrary to all the best traditions of this country. We had no idea, however, that it would be used to exclude from Great Britain a scholar of distinction who has resided here for nearly thirty years, and who has used his scholarship for the benefit of Englishmen. Some explanation is most clearly needed from the Home Office of the reasons for so drastic and extraordinary a decision."[9]

But no explanation has been or will be offered, and Dr. Levy's Government has no right to demand any.

That President Harding's intentions are lofty is evidenced by his description of America's high ideals which he set before American bankers. "I want America to stop and turn its face forward not only for the achievements which we may bring ourselves, but also that we may play our part in showing the world the way to a righteous settlement."[10]

It is not easy to discern the quality which is commonly understood as righteousness in a policy which directly undermines the foundations of a good, sound Government for the sake of enabling non-Catholic sects to snatch a few stray sheep from the Catholic fold. It is equally hard to understand by what order of considerations the urgency and peremptory necessity of such a measure can be brought home to the unbiased mind. And yet Mexicans were seriously told that unless General Obregón violates the Constitution for the purpose of thus setting foreigners above his own fellow-countrymen, the Republic of which he is the recognised chief will be declared to be no Government and the State to be beyond the pale of international law, in spite of the dissent of numerous other sovereign States without whose acquiescence there is no international law. Such a declaration would then confer upon the United States the right to invade Mexico and "protect" its own citizens there. Violation of the Constitution and of his oath to uphold it are, therefore, the two offences which General Obregón is enjoined to commit for the behoof of religious bodies in the United States under pain of seeing the territory of the Republic violated by a "police force" sent by the Administration which is "showing the world the way to a righteous settlement."

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[9] *Westminster Gazette,* 14th September, 1921.

[10] Extract from his speech to the Bankers' Association.

That procedure may be defensible on grounds not yet made known to the world, but it is fair to conjecture that these grounds will deserve some other name than righteousness. The people of the United States, who have the instinct of righteousness without the self-complacency which characterises its political professors, will regret to learn the interpretation which the impartial world is thus forced to put on the acts of the present Administration. The powerful journalistic articles which have appeared in Spain[11] offer a striking example of this. All admirers of the great American people will be unpleasantly affected by such comments as Deputy Barcia makes on the United States policy: "There are widely known reasons," he writes, "for affirming that the United States is forging ahead with hollow insincerity and making ready for the complete domination of the Continent across the Atlantic."[12] Assuredly it is not the people of the United States who deserve this bitter reproach.

On the other hand one can readily imagine the feelings of thinking Mexicans when their President is summoned by the United States Government to become a perjurer and a violater of the Constitution in order to get recognition, and by the oil companies to obey the Constitution which they say forbids him to diminish their present revenues by heavy taxation! His conduct and that of his fellow-countrymen are thus being carefully framed for them; all that they have to do is to pursue it and enable a few Republican politicians and their plutocratic allies to inaugurate their rightful leadership among the sovereign nations of the world. *Experimentum in corpore vili.*

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[11] In such press organs as *El Debate, El Tiempo, La Libertad,* etc.

[12] *La Libertad,* 11th May, 1921.

The Mexican people are among the last to lay a claim to special righteousness and among the first to allow that claim—were it deserved—by the politicians of the United States, but they do insist on retaining their sovereignty and are not willing to barter that even for righteousness' sake.

CHAPTER XVIII

RECOGNITION BY TREATY

IN theory the matters in dispute between the foreign and the Mexican peoples seem simple enough and capable of being readily adjusted. In reality the settlement demanded by the advocates of the "cleaning-up" process would cut deep into the politico-social ordering of the Southern Republic with incalculable consequences to the parties immediately concerned and a disquieting prospect for the remainder. All that the United States demands officially, for itself and for the European peoples the furtherance of whose interests is entrusted to its care, is that the lives, properties and rights of foreigners in Mexico shall be adequately protected in the future and that the losses which they sustained during the revolutionary upheaval shall be made good. Than this nothing could be fairer, and Mexico, in the person of her President, recognises the obligation and is firmly minded to discharge it without avoidable delay. If that were all, the outlook would indeed be roseate. But as a statement of the issue it is sadly incomplete. There are cross currents beneath the surface which must be reckoned with and forms to be observed which are almost as important as the substance. And these complicate the situation considerably.

Two movements are at present afoot in the United States which are carefully kept sundered there but are merged together in the minds of Mexicans apprehensive of what the morrow may bring. The object of one is the re-establishment of official and friendly intercourse between the two Republics, Mexico redressing her neighbour's grievances and the State Department in Washington recognising President Obregón's government. The ultimate goal of the other is much more comprehensive: it includes a complete rearrangement of the two countries' reciprocal relations along the lines traced by the United States Senate for Cuba. And in the proposed treaty of commerce and amity Mexican statesmen discern the tell-tale nexus between the two. They apprehend that the condition officially put forward which is essentially irrelevant to the question of recognition is but the prelude to the unofficial scheme of which it vaguely sounds the keynote. The function of the one is to furnish the frame-work, that of the other to complete the fabric. Form plays an appreciable rôle in the first, substance monopolises the second. International law should supply the motive power for recognition; public opinion, or what passes muster for that, will provide the stimulus for Cubanisation. The United States Government confines itself to the actual in time and to the Mexican in space, whereas the creators of public sentiment looking further ahead in both are formulating a *modus vivendi* for the future and for Latin-America generally. State sovereignty and its correlate duties towards the unhappy family of nations are the only postulates of the diplomatists.

A specific politico-economic object, commonly known as the Cuban standard, floats before the imagination of an influential group of American business men and politicians. They maintain that for the United States Government to protect the rights of its citizens is a duty. With the oil companies, however, the rearrangement of reciprocal intercourse is an appetite and a somewhat voracious one. And against appetites as against passions there are no arguments that carry. To fall in with the legitimate claims of the United States Government is President Obregón's fixed resolve. To help, however indirectly, build up by a punitive treaty a bridge between those claims and Cubanisation is repugnant to him personally and beyond his powers constitutionally.

Such is the light in which the present controversy is viewed by Mexican statesmen.

It is taken for granted by many that the recognition of the Obregón régime is the one thing necessary and that everything else will be added to that, more or less automatically. As a matter of fact, the real work planned by American reformers, which consists in the splicing of the severed strands of international intercourse, will not commence until recognition has been vouchsafed, and it is doubtful whether it will entirely end before much in Mexico that seems firmly rooted to-day will have been plucked out of the political soil to make room for something wholly different. One may recognise this eventuality without characterising the motives of those who are striving to realise it. Their standards are said to be North American and their ideals have nought in common with those of the people whom they would fain "regenerate." Carranza perceived the existence and gauged the strength of this inchoate process which was silently going forward in his time, but his clumsy exertions which, not contented with damming it, aimed at starting a counter-current throughout Latin-America only intensified its force.

In Mexico the ultimate aim of the scheming outsiders is believed to be the Americanisation of the Latin races. This, however, must not be taken to connote a form of that morbid land hunger which is now driving so many European States to the brink of ruin, nor to be deliberate on the part of the responsible statesmen. Territorial expansion is not one of the impelling forces of the people of the United States to-day, nor indeed will it be the mainspring of the policy of any country whose destinies are controlled .by a statesman of vision. Even Tsarist Russia, when well advised, discarded it. The keynote of the late Count Witte's Far Eastern line of action was gradual, economic interpenetration without violence or annexation. And the business men of the great American Republic to-day are alive to the advantages of preferential economic usufruct and also to the drawbacks attending the forcible annexation of a country abounding in natural resources and inhabited by a people passionately fond of liberty.

To-day Count Witte's theory of economic interpenetration is become a maxim of international politics. It is translated into American by the term Cubanisation and into Mexican Spanish by the word protectorate or "ethical guardianship." Those American statesmen, captains of industry and enterprising pioneers whose wealth or reputations depend upon the degree to which Mexican conditions are made to approach their ideal, are penetrated with the desire that no redress of grievances, no compensation for past wrongs, no guarantee of present rights should be accepted as adequate. They are also, however, aware that to Cubanise Mexico without more ado would be to fly in the face of public sentiment in the United States, whose people is always actuated by a dominant sense of fair play. Hence they have reduced their minimum demands to a treaty of amity and have raised those of the Government by insisting on this. That was the utmost which Mr. Hughes consented to accept as a prerequisite to recognition. But it is enough for the purpose of driving a wedge between the two States. An instrument of that kind comprehensively drafted would bind present and future Mexican Governments, fix their foreign policy for all time, keep them within narrow limits and confer upon the State Department in Washington the right to supervise the execution of the compact by forewarnings and advice as well as by vetoes and protests and to enforce it when requisite by military and naval measures. They urge that pronouncements issued by native institutions, whether by Congress or the Supreme Court, however solemn and emphatic, lack the element of stability inasmuch as being one-sided they might be rescinded and reversed as easily as they were made.

This argument is identical with that employed by certain members of the German Government during the war against the restitution of Belgium to her former independent status It was alleged that recent history had shown that no promises of neutrality made by Belgium could be trusted and that the only guarantees which would adequately reassure the German people must be embodied in a treaty imposing limitations upon the sovereignty of the Belgian realm. The answer made by allied diplomacy was that guarantees which give absolute certitude are not attainable in politics and it was emphasised by the energy with which the allied armies prosecuted the war.

Now the politicians and business men who carried their treaty scheme and had it adopted by the State Department were well aware that, as it stood, President Obregón neither could nor would comply with the demand to agree to it. And conversant as they are with Mexican affairs they clearly understood the nature of the consequences to which his refusal would open the door. And those dire consequences, it is argued, are far from being unwelcome to them.

Thus in one of its aspects the present divergence between the two Governments appears to hinge upon a mere matter of form: whether recognition should be accorded before or after the settlement of outstanding scores. And for form, as such, English-speaking peoples, especially those who dwell on the western shores of the Atlantic, feel and exhibit scant respect. The Mexicans, on the contrary, are wont to set it almost on the same level as substance and occasionally higher still. The forms and symbols which affect national dignity, for example, are for them things just as real as national property and are valued and cherished as highly. But the average American official who holds mere forms in contempt has no understanding of the Mexican's national dignity and cannot bring himself to believe that the Mexican has any. And this is a fruitful source of misunderstanding. But the roots of the matter lie much deeper.

In this case form is an integral part of the substance and the stakes played for include much more than a question of procedure or preference. The arguments that favour a written covenant are forcible. It appears quite reasonable that the Southern Republic should have a commercial treaty with its great northern neighbour—not necessarily, however, a treaty conferring special privileges on its great sister—seeing that nowadays all States are linked together with all other States by compacts of this nature and none of them feels that its interests are damaged, its dignity wounded or even its freedom of action inconveniently hampered thereby. Why then, it is asked, should Mexico shrink from binding herself by a formal compact of that harmless nature? Is her national dignity specifically different from that of every other nation? Is her sensitiveness a morbid symptom or a hollow pretext? The answer is that it is neither. Mexico has no rooted repugnance to discuss the terms of a commercial treaty unless it be the prelude to economic interpenetration. What she declines is a process of bargaining for recognition. And her objections are derived from international usage, from a deep-rooted sentiment—over-developed it may be, but very real, which the average foreigner is unable to discern or unwilling to allow for—and from an intense solicitude to preserve unimpaired her attributes of sovereignty which in this case are demonstrably at stake.

These considerations, misgivings or precautions, trivial though they may appear to the large-hearted American, carry great weight with the Mexican who realises the forlorn condition of his country. Mexico to-day stands alone in the world, isolated and impoverished. She has no powerful friend on the globe and the kind of friendship which is within her reach she instinctively eschews. Her own people are not yet sufficiently united to present a compact front to outsiders so long as the dispute is diplomatic. Many of her distinguished citizens are become *frondeurs* who mistake a party for their country and add to the difficulties of their Government. Her one strong man is exerting himself untiringly to clear away the ruins left by the subversive waves of ten years' successive revolutions. But as yet he lacks an adequate staff of competent helpers. The funds needed for urgent internal reforms are not sufficient. France and Britain, who would gladly succour him financially, morally, politically, are either themselves without the means or else they do not venture to take independent action in the matter lest they should offend the United States on whose good will they are dependent elsewhere. The Republics of Latin-America fail to see that Mexico's cause is their own. Thus Mexico, exhausted economically and morally, stands alone face to face with the greatest Power on the globe. President Obregón has nought to rely upon, therefore, but moral force to stay or check that mighty influence which tends to impress a new course upon the current of Mexico's national life. He presumably draws from the history of Mexico's past relations with the United States warnings and forebodings which cast a deep shadow over his picture of their future friendly intercourse. Accordingly he deems it to be his duty to withstand such pressure brought to bear upon him as would jeopardise the sovereignty of the Republic. To accuse him of criminal stubbornness for this attitude is like classifying as ferocious a certain domestic animal on the ground that it defends itself desperately when attacked. It is not surprising that a Mexican in his position should regard the violent imposition of a treaty of friendship as a contradiction in terms. He feels the force of the Russian saying that "you cannot make yourself loved by coercion."

The recognition of one Government by another is hardly more than an implicit admission that the administration recognised does really represent the country, is authorised to act in its name and can be approached and dealt with as its trustee and mouthpiece. The theory, accepted and acted upon by other nations, is confirmed by international precedent. Treaties are negotiated only with recognised Governments and this principle is so rigorously upheld that even when one of the countries has been vanquished in battle by the other recognition invariably precedes treaty-making. The two are never simultaneous and to endeavour to make them so is an unwarranted innovation. In all such cases the terms of the covenant are discussed on their intrinsic merits exclusively, and to enforce them as a condition of recognition is therefore an anomaly. Whether Obregón's Government is entitled to be regarded as the legal repository of valid authority in the Mexican Republic depends upon its relations to the Mexican nation, not upon its liabilities, and still less upon its readiness to accept a compact regulating its future behaviour. In the history of diplomacy which supplies precedents of international law there is no example of recognition being confounded with the settlement, nor even the express acknowledgment, of claims made by the recognising State. Still less does it presuppose that a treaty of friendship has been concluded or agreed upon by the two. To assume the contrary is to ignore the rules that govern international relations and to forget the bearings of recent events.

President Obregón's objections to a preliminary treaty are many and convincing. One of them is that it is a slightly disguised form of purchase money paid for recognition. Insistence upon it by the United States would be evidence that the Government which the Mexican people regard as the repository of the sovereign rights of the Republic cannot be trusted even for a brief span of time. And true or false, nothing could well be more humiliating. Those manifestly are also the views taken by a number of sovereign States—among them Italy, Japan, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, the Argentine—which have already given recognition to the Obregón Administration in accordance with international usage. They implicitly hold that Mexico's differences with foreign countries can best be adjusted by diplomatic methods after recognition. And it is hardly too much to assert that Britain and France would likewise have recognised President Obregón if considerations of political expediency had not impelled them to refrain from weakening Washington's influence in Mexico by countering or checking her policy there, even when that policy is a flat negation of their economic interests.

Lastly, the advocates of unconditional recognition point out that former Mexican Administrations much less promising than that of General Obregón received recognition *de facto* and *de jure* without any preliminary compact. That was the experience of the Carranza Government. "Why," it is asked, "should the actual President with whom the exercise of justice is the result not of an effort but of an inborn instinct be treated worse than his predecessor of whom Americans affirmed that injustice had become almost a second nature? Surely the ruler to whose moral sense of fairness all his experience, thoughts and motions are set and referred as to a fixed standard should be allowed to share at the very least the same degree of trust as the 'artful dodger' between whose words and deeds there often yawned an impassable abyss. It is a waste of energy to knock at an open door and a damaging blunder to use force to compel a friendly Government to do what it is effecting voluntarily. Nor is it worldly wise to strive to divest of his prestige in the eyes of the nation the one man who is able and willing to satisfy the equitable demands of Mexico's creditors and to realise the hopes of her well-wishers."

No imaginative observer touched with even a vague sense of the tragic elements in Obregón's position, as he crosses the national stage, can help hoping that he at least will be allowed to play his part without being baulked by sticklers for monopolies and greedy fortune-hunters. The retrospective mind, evoking the figure of the petted and spoiled Carranza, recoils from the thought that foreign Governments should whet the edge of the irony of circumstance by putting a premium on bad faith and punishing plain dealing.

But it is further urged that, independently of the personal deserts of Mexico's First Citizen, the interests and claims of the three foreign Governments postulate unconditional recognition. For if those demands are to be satisfied fully and in amicable fashion, common sense prescribes that the ways and means be left to the one man whose office, experience, sense of justice, tact and popularity qualify him to establish such internal conditions as alone can render the settlement possible. If the unprecedented stand be taken and the dangerous principle enforced that not only the results aimed at but also the means of attaining them ought to be outlined by a foreign power, then the prospect changes and the issue turns upon Mexico's sovereign rights. And before any such international compact can be imposed upon President Obregón, internal troubles may be generated which must be quelled by force, and ultimately by force from outside. This would confront both parties with a factor of unknown character and magnitude which might stand for anything from local revolts to widespread resistance against any and every national institution that had countenanced such external interference. And the latter state of Mexico might be worse than the former. Would her neighbours and creditors appreciably benefit by this upheaval? They would be creating the situation which they profess to apprehend. For if that is not the consummation wished for it certainly is the one that will be precipitated.

The insistence of the United States Government on a preliminary treaty means that recognition on the American Continent is become something wholly different from what it has been hitherto and still is in the remainder of the world to-day.

In international law it is no more than an implicit acknowledgment by one State that another State has a government which duly represents it and exercises legal and valid authority within its frontiers. That and nothing more. Now this condition which is necessary and adequate has a purely domestic character. So true is this that even the all-powerful dissolvent of war itself does not affect it. Take a striking example. The Emperor Franz Josef died before the armistice, yet his successor was tacitly recognised as the ruler of Austria-Hungary even by his enemies who discussed peace proposals with his envoy, Prince Sixtus, and peace conditions with the delegates whom he sent to St. Germain. They did not insist upon a treaty as a prerequisite to recognition, but only as a condition of peace. After all, a State usually has a much longer life than any of its governments and it continues to subsist after a régime is overthrown. But once it establishes a government which is not the occasion of civil war, its neighbours if they desire to hold intercourse with it must acknowledge it without laying down conditions of their own making.

Take a case in point. Great Britain and Russia are still at loggerheads on the matter of the latter's debts, the damages which her revolution caused to British capitalists and the compensation owing to British subjects. For in Bolshevist Russia the rights of private property and free trading have been continually and systematically trampled under foot. Notwithstanding this, however, and despite other more incriminating counts in the indictment, Great Britain has recognised the Bolshevist régime as the *de facto* Government of Russia. And it would have done this over two years ago if Mr. Lloyd George had had his way. The Court of Appeals in England has recently ruled[1] that in virtue of that recognition all acts of the Soviet Government performed before, as well as after, the signing of the trade agreement are outside the jurisdiction of British Courts as being the acts of a Sovereign Government.[2] Here, then, recognition was given because the Bolshevist Administration, however obnoxious it might be to the British people, was accepted as the outward expression of the sovereignty of the State and as the sole agency by which the sovereign powers of the State are exercised. That is the significance of the act. Whether in the case of the Bolshevist Government recognition can also be justified as expedient or moral, is a question which does not concern us here. The essence of the matter lies in the circumstance that Russia's debts to Great Britain, her liability for damages incidentally done to the lives and possessions of British subjects during the Revolution and for the further injuries caused by deliberately hostile misdeeds had no place in the balance. As these considerations stood and could stand in no relation to the legal claim of the Bolshevist Government to exercise the sovereign rights of the State, they went for nothing.

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[1] On May 12th, 1921.

[2] Ibidem.

Now in the case of Mexico, it is urged, the arguments against Mr. Hughes' demand have incomparably more force than those which carried the day in favour of the recognition of the Russian Duumvirate. In fact, there is not a single motive drawn from Mexico's debts or commitments—none of these have been, or will be, repudiated—which can reasonably be pleaded as an argument against acknowledging the present Government, seeing that it is admittedly the agency by which the sovereign rights of the Republic are duly exercised. In fact, if it be not first recognised, it cannot be deemed competent to conclude any treaty or compact or to satisfy any claims whatever.

It may be objected that the United States has created a new precedent and laid down as an indispensable condition that the Government to be recognised must first prove that it has both the disposition and the power to discharge its international obligations, and unless and until it has successfully undergone these two tests it is not entitled to be recognised. With the assumptions underlying these terms Mexico can join issue and show that this innovation has not been accepted by the community of nations, forms no part of international law, is therefore binding on no Power and is tantamount to a disregard for the law of nations.

What it amounts to is the one-sided promulgation of a principle new to international custom and tradition, which shall be applicable on the American Continent to Latin-American States and shall fit in with that new and comprehensive interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine which has been advocated by Mr. Fall in his public utterances. This tendency is a survival of the ambitious experiment tried at the time of the historic Panama Congress[3] and thwarted in the clash between the Adams administration and the Jackson opposition. The object of that polity was to organise the Western Continent "as a unit in independence of, and possible hostility to, the Eastern Continent." Some of the soundest American thinkers on both sides of the Rio Grande pulverised the notion of this dual organisation of the world. "In their quarrels with European States," writes the eminent American sociologist already quoted, "it suits the South American States very well that the United States should act the cat's-paw for them, *but it cannot be that their statesmen will be so shortsighted as to accept a protection which would turn into domination without a moment's warning*. . . . The advocates of the Monroe Doctrine have been forced to meet the argument that their doctrine was not in international law by new spinnings of political metaphysics. *They have to try to cover the fact that the Monroe Doctrine is an attempt by the United States to define the rights of other nations.* The modern conception, however, is that the States of the world are all united in a family of nations whose rights and duties towards each other are embodied in a code of international law."[4] That is a fair statement of the case.

Those words uttered by a sagacious and patriotic American are re-echoed to-day by those Mexican statesmen who are endeavouring to rough-hew the destinies of their nation. They believe that they are breasting a current which—if they fail to stem it—will soon carry away the substance of Mexico's sovereignty. They are convinced that the first steps at the parting of the ways are decisive. And they are rightly resolved, come what will, to stand their ground and make the true issues clear to the whole world.

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[3] In the year 1824.

[4] Cf. *War and Other Essays*, by W. G. Sumner, p. 278. The italics are mine.

That, in brief, is President Obregón's attitude—as it appears to an onlooker—towards the imposition of friendship by a treaty and a threat.

A curious political document drawn up by the representatives of the "unpolitical oil corporations" interested in Mexico deals with this matter in a series of fallacies which might impress the mere lawyer but could not impose upon the student of international politics. The gist of this prolix argument which is thick-set with irrelevant quotations is briefly this: In determining whether the United States Government should recognise a new Government "erected by a foreign country there are two tests which have been always applied in determining this question: 1. Whether it is in possession of the machinery of the State and is in a position to fulfil its international obligations. 2. Whether it is disposed and willing to fulfil such obligations." One of the principal quotations given is this: "It has been the custom of the United States, when such changes of government have heretofore occurred in Mexico, to recognise and enter into official relations with the *de facto* Government as soon as it should appear to our Government to have the approval of the Mexican people *and should manifest a disposition to adhere to the obligations of treaties and international friendship.*

"It cannot be too strongly emphasised that both of these tests must be applied with satisfactory results in order to meet the requirements of the United States State Department. Mere capacity to act properly unaccompanied by the disposition to do so is not enough; and the mere disposition, without the capacity, is, of course, unavailable." [5]

This argument answers itself. For either the Obregón administration possesses the will and the power to meet those requirements or it lacks them. In the former case, recognition should be accorded without more ado, and in the latter it is preposterous to suppose that the act of signing a treaty would make up for deficiency of will and power to fulfil international duties. In order to gauge aright the significance of the demands put forward by Mr. Hughes, one need only imagine that they proceeded from Japan, were addressed to the United States and intimated Japan's refusal to recognise the present Republican Administration until and unless Japanese subjects are treated in accordance with the law of nations.

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[5] *Moore's Digest*, Int. Law, Vol. 1, p. 148.

With the praiseworthy intention of helping Mexico out of her difficulties Mr. Hughes, who seems to operate with abstract principles *in vacuo,* has provided a lever for all those Mexicans and Americans who are working openly or covertly for the overthrow of the present Mexican Government. In his zeal for the defence of the rights of property he is sapping the power of the only defenders of property in the Republic. In the name of righteousness he is unwittingly aiding and abetting the conspirators who are plotting to replunge the country in confusion and urging President Obregón to break his plighted word. On behalf of a great democracy he is forcing Mexico by means of a financial and political boycott to acquiesce in a treaty which it considers detrimental to its sovereignty. In these ways he has established a strong claim to be judged not by what he is doing but by what he would do.

The obnoxious treaty, it is argued, possesses the advantage that it can be enforced by military and naval pressure. True. But then so can any arbitrary exaction, and to plead this as an argument is to pass from the sphere of right to that of might. In any case it is an innovation for Mexico, and a perilous as well as a humiliating one. Nor is it only international law and Mexican forebodings which reject the condition as capricious; the acid test of common sense produces the self-same effect. To discover the real disposition of any Government and discern motive behind the mask of words one must be a veritable seer. Yet the politicians who advocate conditional recognition claim to be able to accomplish it. As for the second condition—the proof that any Government disposes of adequate power to discharge all its international obligations—it cannot be adduced until the experiment has been made. And Mexico is keen to make it, whereas those who profess to desire it are resolutely hindering her.

If we glance at the action of the world Powers to-day we find that they discard all such conditions as worse than useless. They unhesitatingly recognised the Austrian Government, well knowing that it lacked the means of fulfilling its international obligations, and they recognised the German Government despite the firm and outspoken conviction of its members that it could not meet its international liabilities and that even if it possessed the power it lacked the disposition. "Yes," one may object, "but in that case the Powers were and are prepared to enforce fulfilment by arms if necessary." "So too," Mexicans may retort, "is the Government of the United States, the only difference between the two being the resolve of the latter to employ force, if necessary, before recognition, and humiliation prior to force." And force will prove disastrous. International experts are agreed that it is meet that every attempt to isolate and impoverish a country for the purpose of constraining its Government to part with certain attributes of sovereignty should be unmasked and characterised as what it is—an unjustifiable breach of the laws and customs of nations, and that the despatch of a foreign police force to that country on the pretext that it has no recognised Government is neither more nor less than an overt act of war which deserves to be treated as such. It is the duty of the aggrieved State to accept such an overt act of war for what it really is.

However just, then, the basic demands voiced by the Washington State Department may be, the ground on which General Obregón declines to consider them is that they are to be embodied in a covenant and imposed as a condition of recognition. And his contention is unanswerable. For they have no more to do with recognition than a clause of the postal convention. It is pretty certain that Mexico's next Ambassador to Washington will wear a decent suit of clothes there and will not clash with the criminal law of the country. But if it pleased President Harding to refuse to receive any Mexican Ambassador unless his Government first promised in writing that he would don the conventional garb of civilised men and conducted himself properly, these terms would be summarily rejected and all the world would applaud. If the world is less awake to the extraordinary nature of the demand for a treaty, before recognition, it is because the issue is obscured by being mixed up with extraneous matter. The public is told, for instance, that the Mexican Constitution contains a clause confiscating the property of Americans who have invested their capital, devoted their brains and employed their time in exploiting the oil fields and that the confiscatory effect of that clause must be neutralised by treaty before the Republic can be admitted into communion with three Powers—one may call them the Triple Entente for the Protection of American Rights. And the public accepts the allegation without further enquiry while those publicists who seek to place the matter in a different light find it passing difficult to ventilate their views in the United States press.

Now that way of stating and confusing the question is hardly fair. Article 27 is not confiscatory, because it does not stand alone. If it stood alone, retroactive force might perhaps be read into it by jurisconsults, and retroactive force would undoubtedly render it what is termed confiscatory. But nothing less than that. For the clause only nationalises the products of the subsoil and nobody has ever denied to the Mexican Republic the right to do this. What foreigners clamour against is the nationalisation of property which they had legally acquired before the Constitution was passed. And their resentment would be natural were their apprehensions well founded. But they are not. All such property is expressly exempted by Article XIV which declares that nationalisation shall not work backwards but only forwards. Its operation will be confined to the future and eliminated from the past. There is, therefore, no need whatever, Mexicans hold, for a treaty binding their Government to that interpretation of Clause XXVII which Secretary Hughes considers just. The Constitution itself leaves no doubt about the right interpretation.

The opinion of the President of the Mexican Senate is worth reproducing here as a contribution to the discussion.

This legislator[6] contends that Article 27 has been disingeniously construed by Mexican engineers. What the enactment really meant to do, he tells the public, was to establish the *direct* dominion of the State over the treasures of the subsoil but not its *absolute* dominion. It was the crafty engineers who distorted the tenor of the law. And the confiscatory decrees against which the foreign companies raised their voices and invoked the aid of their respective Governments presuppose the absolute dominion of the State, which was never aimed at by the legislators.[7] This is the interpretation of an eminent Senator and as such it is worth recording. He seeks to reinforce it by laying stress on the circumstance that the decrees thus falsified did not bring in one cent to the nation during the three years that have passed since their promulgation. Experience has merely demonstrated their uselessness and the impossibility of applying them. Indeed, the only noteworthy effect they produced has been to whet the cupidity of a few persons who covet their neighbour's goods. And he illustrates this by interesting examples.

There was a Cuban citizen, he goes on to narrate, who spent the best years of his life selling cigars on one of the main thoroughfares of the Mexican capital. This humble individual has rapidly became the proprietor of more than 250 oil properties in virtue of those misinterpreted decrees. And curiously enough the lands are all situated in the very best localities, just as though he had devoted the twenty years of his life spent in vending cigars to the study of the geography of oil wells! Another stroke of similar good fortune favoured a certain engineer who had merely to sign his name and buy a revenue stamp worth thirty pesos in order to become the fortunate owner of a well in Zacamixtle which brings him in 50,000 barrels of oil daily. This favourite of fortune, it is believed, was unaware of the whereabouts of Zacamixtle when he first acquired his holding there.

The Senator pointedly declares that to render the nationalisation act retroactive would be to violate justice and to fly in the face of the law itself. If the petroleum were the property of the nation, he urges, how could private individuals and foreign companies go on selling and exporting it as they have been doing on the strength of their leases and fees-simple?[8] The contradiction is manifest.

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[6] Señor Adalberto Rios.

[7] Cf. *Universal*, 14th April, 1921.

In truth it was President Carranza's decree which originated the trouble. That President's treatment of foreign investors was at times most reprehensible and his endeavour to justify it by an appeal to Article 27 was a fallacy in law and a blunder in politics. And in this it is said he sinned against his own countrymen as grievously as against the outlanders, the appeal to the Constitution as his warranty being, so to say, the sin against the Holy Ghost. But for him too the day of doom arrived. His own people removed him from the dictatorial chair and his successors have repeatedly repudiated his doctrine and solemnly promised to repeal the illegal acts and remedy the sinister consequences which have given rise to the present trouble. The injustice perpetrated by one President is being redressed by another and suitable amends made for damages inflicted. In all this the Constitution itself is not in question.

"That is not enough," exclaim the advocates of the new doctrine. "If one President can repeal the acts of another, General Obregón's successor can repudiate the satisfactory interpretation which he may now read into the Constitution and four years hence we may be exactly where we were in 1919, whereas if we possess a binding treaty signed and sealed, we are on the safe side once and for all."

Now that mode of ratiocination is but a piece of specious casuistry. For if Obregón's successor can put a false construction on the clauses of the Constitution he can likewise put a false construction on the terms of the treaty. And what remedy will the United States Government have then? Exactly the same remedy which it possesses to-day without any treaty. That and nothing more. For even to-day, if the President instead of declaring, as he has done, that Article 27 will be regulated by law in a broad spirit of equity and will

[8] *Universal,* 14th April, 1921.

be applied without confiscatory effect or retroactive force,[9] had refused to do anything whatever in the matter, what line of action would then be open to the United States Government? Precisely the same that it would have under the treaty, and none other. In each case it would feel constrained to move in order to assert its rights, and shyness to come forward under such circumstances is not among its marked traits. And in both cases these rights derive from international law. Now if there is no tangible advantage to be gained by imposing a treaty as a prerequisite to recognition, what intangible advantage forms the motive for this singular demand? Mexicans answer the question by an appeal to their history and to the many evil-boding symptoms reported to them lately from the United States. Grounded distrust has large eyes and a quick imagination, especially when portentous facts provide the spectrum.

All that is so clear that it would be superfluous to dwell upon it were it not that the attention of the public is deflected from the main issue by a cloud of wholly irrelevant considerations which are rooted in American group, party or personal interests and ambitions. There is but one fair way of presenting the matter to the world and it is this: Is it congruous with international law to constrain a sovereign State to conclude a treaty against its will? Is not such an act an abuse of power? Would a treaty be conducive to the praiseworthy aim which Mr. Hughes assuredly has in view—i.e., the protection of American rights? Nowise. For when he refuses to accept the guarantees now offered by the Mexican Government, it is admittedly because that Government may be unable to make good its less solemn promises. Yet it is exactly the same set of guarantors who will underwrite the treaty. There are none other. And if they are too powerless or too fickle to be trusted in the one case, the same disqualifications attach to them in the other case.

What the American State Department, doubtless with the best intentions, asks is that General Obregón shall consent to a transaction which would brand himself and his administration as disingenuous or weak-willed, self-seeking men who have inherited together with the liabilities of their predecessors their defects and vices. As the State Department was unable to trust Carranza's pledged word it argues that it can have just as little faith in Obregón's emphatic assurances and it implicitly calls upon him constructively to admit that it is right by signing a document which would be superfluous on any other supposition and is humiliating and illegal on this. To contend that a treaty brought about under such conditions is not a humiliation of the entire Mexican people is to ignore the meaning of national dignity. Mexicans go further and assert that it is an attempt to goad the President into trampling on the laws of his country which he has sworn to observe and enforce. That this would be the direct effect of compliance with the demand of the State Department is evident. It is a noteworthy phenomenon, we are further told, that an instigation of this demoralising character should have found a place in the programme of a Republic to which is ascribed the future rôle of ethical guardian of the backward Latin-American peoples. If you want to shape a people's conduct for the general good, you must appeal to it through creditable motives and key it up to commendable, not to blameworthy, acts. A President who should openly qualify for his certificate as a good moral ruler by lawless deeds and downright perjury would be a poor reformer for the ill-starred Mexican Republic.

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[9] Statement issued by General Obregón to the press on April 3rd, 1921.

The fundamental law which the President has sworn to observe contains an article[10] expressly withholding from him the right to conclude any such treaty as that proposed. If therefore he sets his hand to the Covenant on which the State Department insists, he is violating both the Constitution and his oath to observe it. There are doubtless ambitious men devoid of scruples who would pay even that price for power—the names of some of them have recently become public property—but President Obregón is not a member of the group. The inevitable effect of compliance with the State Department's demand would be to lower him to their level and his fellow-citizens naturally join him in resenting the attempt.

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[10] Article XV.

Further, assent to the proposal would be an implicit avowal that the Constitution establishes and legalises systematic confiscation of American property and that President Obregón considers it a praiseworthy act to violate such an iniquitous charter. Can he be expected to make that avowal? Would any self-respecting man make it? One knows what to think of a leader who first publicly proclaims his resolve to respect the Constitution, then swears fidelity to it and a few months later agrees to trample it under foot in order to induce a foreign Power to recognise him as its guardian. Is it conceivable that the assertion of American rights calls for such a tremendous change in the political fabric of the Southern Republic as the dissolution of democratic government there and the setting up of a dictatorship, to qualify for which perjury is a peremptory prerequisite?

Many of Obregón's countrymen are prone to suspect that behind the imposition of a treaty as a preliminary to recognition lies some unavowed and sinister purpose. And this purpose they believe themselves able to perceive or divine, and entitled to counter. For, as we saw, the condition in question is a recent innovation for which no satisfactory grounds have been assigned. It is known to have been unthought of before the closing months of the Wilson Administration. And it is admitted that nothing has since occurred to render it desirable or feasible,—that in fact the main events which have taken place in Mexico since then were calculated to produce the opposite effect. And the knowledge of these considerations was expected to exert a decisive and restraining influence over the attitude of the Republican Administration. How telling a disadvantage it is thus to have international usage, ethics, logic and common sense and the example of all disinterested nations arrayed on the side of a little State in its passive resistance to the Government of a great and fair-minded people may be gathered from recent history. It would be superfluous to recall the examples.

In the first month of 1917 the American Government, hearing that Carranza was devising measures of a confiscatory nature to the detriment of foreigners in Mexico, sent him a note to the effect that it would not "acquiesce in any direct confiscation of foreign-owned properties in Mexico or indirect confiscation." Soon afterwards the Constitution was adopted —the Constitution which is now the bogey of the foreign oil men and their political allies. The State Department in Washington forthwith asked for assurances from the Mexican Government that *in enforcing this constitutional provision American rights would suffer no abridgment.* That is all that was asked for. And if it was necessary it certainly was adequate. It is manifest then that no rooted objection to the application of any part of the Mexican Constitution was at that time entertained by the State Department. Article 27 as modified by Article 14 was neither condemned nor held to be incompatible with any foreigner's rights or interests. On the contrary it was rightly assumed to be reconcilable with these. All that was needed was an assurance that in applying it American rights would not be infringed. And this assurance was given before a month had gone by [11] to the present Under-Secretary Fletcher. This response and a later one couched in similar terms were deemed to be perfectly "reassuring," when Carranza was in power. The Constitution was not called in question. It is fair to conclude that the assurance then asked for, accompanied and followed by tangible evidence of its sincerity, would meet all the requirements of the case now that the presidential chair is occupied by a Mexican whose rectitude and will-power are beyond the reach of evil. We need not forget the imbecilities of the Carranza administration nor palliate the presidential decrees which called forth protests from the Powers of the "Triple Entente." What really matters, however, is the striking change for the better which has taken place in Mexico since then and is being deepened and extended by the present Government. And this change warrants a more generous—or rather, a more just—attitude towards Mexico than was displayed by the United

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[11] On February 20th, 1917. It was repeated on the 2nd of August following.

States during the Carranza régime when graft and sinister interest were rampant. And in any and every case a demand to-day for terms which were not considered necessary then would under all the circumstances have a blighting effect on the moral sense and self-esteem of the nation that enforced as well as the nation that accorded it.

Those are some of the musings of those Mexicans who think and read and remember and wonder how it comes to pass that the great American people, in whose name that unacceptable demand has been presented, have never had the issues clearly placed before them. They complain that in none of the widely circulating journals of the Union has their side of the question been comprehensively set before the public, nay, that it has been positively and systematically kept out by occult influences. Surely it cannot be true of the Great Western democracy as it is of the Russian Bolshevist State, that politics is for the governing few and propaganda for the masses, or that it is disastrous to be right when the Administration happens to be wrong? And yet that is the view ascribed to certain North American politicians by Mexicans who object to be browbeaten into friendship with a foreign government in accordance with a plan devised by corporations and schemers whom they regard as enemies of their country.

There is much more to be said on the subject but this is not the place to say it. The bearings of the treaty proposal upon the internal situation in Mexico cannot be ignored by the public, however much they may have been missed by responsible American politicians. One aspect of the matter hinges on the sinister effects which the forcible imposition of the treaty condition would produce on the public peace which Obregón has just restored. And these effects will be realised irrespective of the form in which the will of the United States Government is enforced, whether it be by the perpetuation of the economic blockade, the seizure of Mexican Custom houses, the despatch of warships or by undisguised military intervention. Tentative intervention has been going on all the time. But the spirit in which any decisive manœuvre to abridge the sovereignty and wound the dignity of the Mexican

Republic would be resented by those who speak and act in its name is still but imperfectly realised to the north of the Rio Grande. And it is hardly too much to affirm that the reaction against such coercion would assume forms which would destroy the last vestige of pacification and throw open the sluice gates to anarchy, confusion and destructiveness. Is that the consummation which the inspirers of the financial boycott have at heart?

There are but two sets of political conditions in which germs of chronic unrest can thrive and fructify in Mexico to-day, and of these one is not yet fully operative while the other is unhappily realised. The former is the line of coercive foreign action now being pursued in the United States, and the latter is the perpetuation of that portion of the Constitution which bestows sovereignty upon the various States of the Mexican Union. For the moment we are concerned only with the former and with it merely in so far as it obviously aims at the ousting of General Obregón from the presidency of the Mexican Republic and the substitution of a subservient instrument there for a genial worker,—of an Americanised pawn for a Mexican Chief.

The belief is wide-spread and deep-rooted in Mexico that the latter consummation is being deliberately, directly and lawlessly striven for. This is a grave charge to level at any section of the citizens of a powerful nation and the people of the United States naturally looks forward to its speedy disproval while the people of Mexico as naturally anticipates the production of substantiating evidence. The historian in the meanwhile can content himself with chronicling the beliefs and tempers of each, waiting for what the morrow will bring forth and expressing his regret for the sake of art and politics that the most consummate actors are not to be found on the theatrical stage.

CHAPTER XIX

THE PUBLIC DEBT AND NATIONAL CRIMINALITY

NO NATION can live longer in peace than its neighbour pleases. Neither can any undeveloped and untutored people like the Mexicans establish by peaceful methods a new and stable order after the dissolution of its ancient politico-social bonds, unless its wealthy and powerful neighbour allows it. The enterprise on which the Obregón administration has embarked is neither more nor less than the complete reconstruction of a society. The task is not new in the world's history. It has been accomplished in various countries more than once but under conditions so unlike those with which the Mexican President has to cope that the experience of the past is of little help in his undertaking. The notion that a foreign Government, and in particular that of the United States, can prescribe what is good for the people of the Southern Republic better than the leaders of that people is preposterous. What the capitalist groups and their political allies desire—and it is they who make this bold assumption—is that the period which has elapsed since the halycon days of Diaz should be treated as an impertinent parenthesis in history and the threads of national and international polity be taken up where they fell from the nerveless hands of that aged Dictator. The Revolution and its consequences are to be ignored, the hands of the clock of time turned back. Truly the minds to which these ideas commend themselves are not of the type that can offer sound advice, still less continuous guidance.

The revolutions through which Mexico has passed—largely the outcome of foreign economic thraldom—were undoubtedly a fruitful source of national misfortunes. They kept the nation anchored in the stream of time while other peoples were rapidly moving forward to pleasant harbours. They dethroned cherished ideals and overthrew institutions that had once performed a useful part in the State organism and some that were still indispensable for a time: They dislocated trade, commerce and industry. All this is true and deplorable. But it is well worth noting withal, say Mexican thinkers, that throughout this awful welter the people were actuated by an ardent instinctive desire to better the lot of the whole community, to create equal opportunity for all, to inaugurate an era of justice and liberty and to put an end to one of the most repulsive spectacles ever witnessed in any country—the perpetuation of national misery, ignorance and disease, nay of the degeneration of a naturally gifted people—in order that a few foreign corporations should pile up immense dividends and a few foreign politicians should make a dent in local history.

And this was a noble striving, little though it is understood by those interested outlanders who would fain present the Mexicans with the fruit of the tree of knowledge and teach them what is good and what is bad for them.

Now that the revolutionary epoch has come to an end, and even the bitterest enemies of the new régime have decided to content themselves with constitutional weapons in their future struggles, President Obregón, his Government and his people are confronted with the prospect of being thrust back into the quagmire of chaos from which they have just emerged. And the people responsible for this back-handed stroke are certain of the groups which have thriven on Mexico's resources and their political coadjutors in the United States. Mexicans who have given this matter some thought re-echo with the fervour of conviction the significant utterances of President Harding in the course of his eloquent address from the cloister of the Washington Memorial Chapel[1]: "The rational work of every civilisation is to cure without destroying and guard against the enemies of liberty who come to us cloaked in pretended helpfulness . . ." That is a part of the rational work which President Obregón is conscientiously playing to-day.

As for the official directors of the policy of the United States which is fettering Mexico commercially, financially, industrially, and checking her moral and spiritual development, they at least can lay the unction of good intentions to their souls. They are working in their own way according to their own lights for what they believe is their own country's good and Mexico's. But they are driving the latter country into the Slough of Despond. "I can think of an America," said President Harding in that touching address of his which the *New York Herald* termed "a sermon of faith . . . and hope"—"I can think of an America that can maintain every heritage and yet help humanity throughout the world to reach a little higher plane." So too can the Mexicans, and it is precisely from such an America and not from rich companies and associations which are endeavouring to sway her policy that they looked, less perhaps for immediate help to reach a higher plane, than for common justice. And odd though it sounds, they have hitherto looked in vain.

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[1] On June 6th, 1921.

Mexicans ask: What is justice in the Mexican problem as it affects the great northern Republic? Surely it is to do unto Mexico as you would have Mexico do unto you? Is that the attitude of official circles in the United States? A few instructive incidents in the recent history of the two countries point the answer.

The vagueness, inconstancy and incongruousness of the policy of the United States towards Mexico are among the most perturbing factors with which the latter country is continually full fronted. In the sphere of international relations, where so much else that affects the nation is decided, nobody can foresee to-day what to-morrow will bring forth. The consequent incertitude is disconcerting and mischievous. For the potentialities are well nigh unlimited and range from the exchange of cordial missives and the visits of common friends of the Presidents to the sudden despatch of warships on an errand incompatible with pacific intercourse. The advent to power of the Democratic Party, for instance, means the unfolding of a veritable kaleidoscope of measures that run counter to each other and leave one utterly bewildered, while the triumph of their Republican adversaries brings with it a behest to Mexico to reverse her policies, alter her Constitution, change her laws and follow the new lead under pain of economic strangulation. And however friendly the official attitude may be, Mexicans are never free from the consciousness that a strong and steady undercurrent of unofficial schemes and machinations is flowing onwards into the vast Monroe reservoir, the sluices of which may one day be opened to sweep away their independence.

And in all this there are no principles to discuss, no political conceptions to analyse, no definitions to consider—nothing but the public utterances it may be of an eminent and honourable lawyer or professor who has never studied foreign relations and can have no notion of the psychology of the Mexican people unless he have received it by a pentecostal miracle. And the form is that of a whimsical dilemma which takes no account of national or international precedents.

Conditions like these put a tremendous strain upon the efforts of the men charged with the reorganisation of the Mexican State, fill them with grave anxiety, tend to produce involuntary fluctuations in their policy and confront them with the most sinister prospect which any Government can face. And they are unable to vie with their adversaries, whose influence over the press has no parallel in any other country, in setting their view of the matter before the fair-minded people of the United States. All the items of news calculated to discredit the Mexican people are carefully gathered, classed, commented, launched forth, and at irregular intervals sensational fabrications are circulated as news, the only effect and presumably the sole object of which is to irritate the American nation and produce spurts of fire culminating mayhap in a conflagration. Thus lately [2] a telegram was published by the Universal Service announcing that the American flag flying from a small boat of the warship *Cleveland* was torn down and trampled on by Mexicans during the stay of American ships in Tampico, that "it was unsafe for Americans to walk the streets in Tampico," that "the children cursed us in English and spat at us," and more to the like effect. Against this poisoning of the sources of information—a vice bequeathed by the war propagandists and intensified by other propagandists who have succeeded those—the Mexicans are powerless. But the serene temper and complete absence of irritating language with which those undignified tactics were commented on by the native press challenge and receive the admiration of the foreigner.[3] Probably never since the downfall of Diaz has there been less bitterness, less distrust of the average American by the average Mexican, than to-day, and the example repeatedly given by the President has had a profound, widespread and beneficial effect.

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[2] In the second half of July, 1921. See the *Mexican Post,* July 20th, 1921.

"Without the shadow of a doubt," General Obregón said when addressing American and Mexican citizens in Nogales,[4] "it is to morality and to culture that the world of the future will look for guidance and direction. And we, in harmony with this new tendency, will gladly throw open our frontiers and fraternally stretch out our arms to all men of good will who bring with them those two elements of progress and come to co-operate with us for the advancement of our country."[5] The prevalence of this new spirit of brotherhood is still unknown, hardly even suspected by the people of the United States. And yet it is one of the most potent factors in the future relations of both Republics. After all, ignorance of each other is the mother of hatred, feuds and wars among nations. The most efficacious means of securing and maintaining peace is to get the various peoples to know each other and, one may add, to get them also to know themselves. Everything that conduces to that is a valuable international asset and every deliberate attempt to defame the character or exaggerate the defects of a people in the eyes of its neighbours is one of the most nefarious of the many misdeeds that still go unpunished. Those who for such a purpose tamper with the press, the cinema and other sources of public information are among the worst pests of civilised society. And to-day their name is legion.

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[3] "It is the duty of all who love fair play, and especially of those who desire that the United States and Mexico should be friends and good neighbours, to condemn in unmeasured terms the circulation and publication of false reports of the kind above referred to." Cf. *Mexican Post*, July 20th, 1921.

[4] On July 4th, 1920.

[5] The *Nogales Herald*, July 7th, 1920.

General Obregón made a praiseworthy effort to bring influential sections of the people of the United States into close contact with his fellow-countrymen. He had excursions planned for members of various chambers of commerce, journalists, students and men of business to whom the various institutions of Mexico with all their advantages and defects were thrown open unreservedly. It was a noble enterprise worthy of encouragement from all men who have the advance of humanity at heart. Yet it was vigorously discountenanced by the two American associations whose members claim that they are Mexico's best friends. "The American Association of Mexico," we read, "being advised that a Committee of the Confederation of the Mexican Chambers of Commerce is visiting Los Angeles for the purpose of extending invitations to American business men to participate in the International Congress of merchants to be held in Mexico City next June, has decided to counteract this friendly move of Mexican business men by advising American merchants against attending such a conference or accepting any invitation from the Confederation and urge them not to participate in any friendly overtures with the Mexican Government or the Mexican people until the Administration of General Obregón yields to the eight points set forth by this American Association of Mexico for the recognition of the Mexican Government."[6]

The political allies of this and the other great association are credibly affirmed to have approved this unqualified measure.

Mr. Gladstone who had less striking examples of this anti-humanitarian spirit before his eyes wrote with firm conviction: "The history of nations is a melancholy chapter; that is, the history of Governments is one of the most immoral parts of human history."

It is a noteworthy fact that at the present moment two grandiose experiments of a character as novel as they are momentous are being tried in two countries which are as far apart in space as they are in all else—Marxism of an impracticable kind in Russia, and Government based on morality without admixture of "diplomacy" and what "diplomacy" stands for, in Mexico. Those business men and numerous other guests of the latter country from the United States beheld things there as they are—the poverty and ignorance of the people, the backward state of communications, the deadlock produced by State penury, caused by the economic boycott, the accumulating wealth of a few foreign companies, and at the head of this ill-starred nation a man with a genius for moral probity. And returning to their native country they petitioned their Government to put a speedy end to the system of economic throttling to which Mexico is being subjected.

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[6] *El Universal,* March 9th, 1921.

Another equally significant example of the corporate and anti-democratic spirit of the undying class of wealth-monopolisers, as contrasted with the political tact and sense of justice evidenced by President Obregón is afforded by their respective attitudes on the subject of taxation. The oil companies, when an additional tax was imposed on the crude oil exported from Mexico, uplifted their voices against the assessment, stigmatised it as disguised confiscation, dismissed thousands of working men, filled the newspaper press with lamentations, threats and figures, and then rushed to their Government asking it to make the matter a State concern and to have the tax removed by diplomatic pressure or more drastic methods. On the other hand, Mexicans resident in the United States, some of whom live entirely, others partly, upon the profits from their lands or business in Mexico but have to pay income taxes in the United States upon the whole sum received, irrespective of its source, petitioned President Obregón to press the diplomatic lever for the purpose of having the burden, which they consider unfair, lightened or removed. The President replied to those requests through the Mexican Consuls in the United States as follows: "It behooves all Mexican citizens who enjoy the hospitality of the United States to abide by the laws of that country and to pay their taxes without murmur. In no case will the Mexican Government entertain any requests or petitions of the nature of those which it has recently received, nor can the matter be made a subject for protest or representation to the Government of the United States."[7]

This and similar characteristic facts are unknown in the United States.

It cannot be gainsaid that the enemies of Mexico's independence are working strenuously behind an almost impenetrable screen of prejudice, ignorance and misconception raised by themselves and their propagandists. It is this curtain that hinders the people of the United States from acquainting itself with the remarkable reforms which have already been taken in hand by the present Mexican administration and the deciding circumstance that those measures are being retarded by a group of individuals bent upon creating "accomplished facts" and thereby forcing the hand of the United States Government and the reluctant acquiescence of the people in consequence of those facts.

No Mexican questions the loftiness of Mr. Hughes' intentions or considers the measure in which they shaped themselves conducive to their realisation. Nor can any careful observer blink the grave danger which the deadlock produced by the delay of recognition on the one hand and the continuous machinations of interventionists on the other hand has created for the Mexican Republic. True, Mr. Hughes has brushed aside all Mr. Fall's recommendations excepting that of a treaty antecedent to recognition. A small matter in itself, this is the grain of sand that hinders the international machinery from working. If it could be complied with by the Mexican Government it would add nothing to the existing guarantees for life and property in Mexico, the cordiality of the friendship between the two peoples or the stability of the amicable relations between the two Governments.

And yet that superfluous demand has sealed up all sources of international credit to Mexico, is hindering or retarding the reorganization of the country, and thus providing the enemies of that Republic with pretexts for further complaints and accusations. Caustic criticism is applied, for instance, to the defective condition of the railways, yet the money needed

[7] See also the *Mexican Post*, 24th July, 1921.

for the purchase of rolling stock is withheld on the ground that no loans can be made until the political demand of the State Department has been fulfilled. The work of educating the people, vigorously taken in hand by President Obregón and the Rector of the University, Señor Vasconcellos, who have worked wonders by their splendid campaign against illiteracy, is severely handicapped by lack of funds. And the funds are not available for reasons of foreign politics. Thus Mexico is deliberately kept revolving in a vicious circle. All her financial and economic problems are dealt with on purely political lines and kept without solutions while her proper political status is denied to her on grounds which in the last analysis are industrial and economic. In a word, oil is trump. The claims of the United States Government for losses inflicted on its nationals during the Revolution offer an instructive case in point. The issue turns upon international law, not upon politics. Yet here is what we find: President Obregón writes: "Even now we are planning the machinery that will settle all claims in accordance with the principles laid down by international law. Nor should it be forgotten that as late as six months ago we urged our creditors to send a committee to Mexico for conferences in the interests of fair adjustments and honest settlements. Strangely enough, acceptance of the frank invitation has been prevented by various governmental pressure, and to date Mexico has not been able to secure these face-to-face meetings that are her desire." [8]

To clamour for fair adjustments and honest settlements, then to decline to co-operate in making them, hardly offers firm ground for the contention that Mexico is endeavouring to evade her obligations.

A vast amount of foreign capital in the United States and Europe is waiting to be invested in the Republic from motives which seem conclusive to its possessors. Foreign capitalists are aware that Mexico possesses all the natural conditions requisite and adequate to the creation of wealth. They also know that her liabilities judged by latter-day standards are insignificant. Her debt, for example, which is so often alluded to as "overwhelming and unpaid," is in Mexican pesos as follows:

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[8] Cf. President Obregón's telegram to the *New York World*, 27th June, 1921.

	Principal	Interest due
External debt	287,043,240.53	87,001,260.10
Internal debt	136,510,387.50	42,522,269.33
States' debt	3,500,000.00	1,254,492.75
	427,053,628.03	130,778,022.18
Grand total	557,831,650.21	Pesos
Equivalent	$278,915,825.11	U. S. Currency

"This amount of a little more than a quarter of a billion dollars is distributed among a population of sixteen millions or thereabouts. At the close of the Civil War the United States, with a population two and one-half times as great, had a total indebtedness of three billions of dollars. Canada, with a population of less than one-half that of Mexico, has a present indebtedness of two billions of dollars, and is now increasing it in order to care for its soldiers.

"Mexico has always paid what she owed, and the longer her creditors have waited for her to pay, the more costly it has been to Mexico. It is estimated that the Government revenues for the present year will yield one hundred million dollars United States currency.

"Thus, the total of Mexico's Public Debt is not triple the entire budget of the Republic." [9]

Mexico's per capita national public debt charge amounts to about one U. S. dollar a year whereas that of the Argentine is now more than seven dollars, that of Belgium about sixteen dollars and that of Canada thirty. These figures are significant.

Consequently the national debt is not overwhelming. Neither is there any fear of President Obregón having recourse to the shabby expedients to which so many other States on both shores of the Atlantic have occasionally had recourse. Repudiation has no place in his programme. On the contrary, he has stated publicly and repeatedly that the national debt will be paid to the last farthing. In this connection people who have given this matter their attention recall the fact that several States of the American Union have given a dubious example to Mexico, having themselves been in default for quite a number of years. "It is to be hoped," writes a correspondent of the London *Morning Post*,[10] "that any settlement of British indebtedness will take into consideration these outstanding debts.

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[9] The (New York) *Nation*, June 22nd, 1921.

"According to the annual report of the Council of Foreign Bondholders, the amount to which these States are in default is estimated at $60,000,000. The same report, after taking note of the fact that a settlement of West Virginia's debt was made in 1919, remarks: 'It is indeed regrettable that those States of the nation whose credit leads the world should allow their obligations to continue in default and refuse to listen to appeals from their creditors. The Council would be glad to hear what arguments can possibly be adduced in extenuation of the conduct of Mississippi in repudiating payment of its loans in 1831 and 1833, which were duly authorised by the State Legislature and issued at a high price in this country.

" 'The State invested the proceeds in the establishment of two banks and so long as they prospered Mississippi paid the bondholders; but when the banks ceased to be profitable the State not only suspended payment, but actually repudiated its debt. Such a step has not been taken even by so backward a country as Honduras.'

"The *Morning Post's* correspondent suggests that, now that Great Britain is a debtor country to the United States, the latter be asked to recognise the debt of its defaulting States as a national obligation."

These and similar facts are relevant to the various staple charges brought against the Mexican people.

Before forming a final judgment on disputes such as that which at present sunders the Mexican from the United States Government one would do well to scrutinise the issues in the light of the reciprocal relations of the two States over a number of years. This is the only way to assess at their just value charges preferred by one country, which has but recently desisted from acts of the kind it complains of, against another which is only just following the good example of turning over a new leaf. Thus when looking into the oft-expressed apprehension that Mexico may repudiate her debt, one would do well to bear in mind the virile retort made by President Obregón in his historic telegram to the New York *World*:[11]

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[10] May 2nd, 1921. See also the *New York Times*, 3rd May, 1921.

"We stated repeatedly that Mexico would not repudiate any just obligations. We have always paid our debts, we always will pay our debts. We have seen a loan of $20,000,000 received in 1824 changed magically into a debt of more than a $100,000,000. We have seen Maximillian sign an obligation for $40,000,000 in return for a loan of $20,000,000. We have seen Miramon, the counter-revolutionist, sign a note for $15,000,000 in return for a loan of $750,000. Yet not once, even under these outrageous burdens, have we ever advanced the idea of repudiation. Throughout the revolution we stated repeatedly that Mexico would meet every just obligation without evasion. It is a promise that will be kept to the letter."

The alleged criminality of the Mexican people is another of the many counts in the indictment against that Republic and of the pretexts alleged for the necessity of the "cleaning-up" process. A dispassionate study of the facts, however, will show that the charge is calumnious, and a comparison between the crimes perpetrated against life and property in Mexico and those recorded in other States of the new world, or indeed of the old, will not redound to the discredit of the former country. It would be unfruitful and ungracious to point to the recent lynchings in Georgia, the robberies in the Middle West, the tarring and feathering of defenceless citizens, American and foreign,[12] women and men, in Texas and other parts of the United States, or to the kidnapping of a little boy of five in New York City who was cruelly put to death because his parents were unable to pay the heavy ransom demanded. Nor does the Mexican press make capital out of data of that character. Such revolting atrocities, whether they occur in one republic or the other, kindle a blaze of anger in the hearts of all normal men in both countries. For either people to indulge in exaltation over the other after the matter of the Pharisee in the Gospel, or Mr. Fall in his Report to the Senate, would be unfair and premature.

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[11] June 27th, 1921.

[12] In Miami, Florida, the Rev. Philip S. Irwin, a British subject, rector of a church in the negro quarter, was seized one night by masked men, whipped, tarred and feathered and left lying in the street where he was ultimately found by a policeman. Between April 1st and 24th July, 1921, twenty-six such disgraceful incidents were recorded in Texas.

The same remark holds good of that canker of nearly all the republics of the New Continent for which Americans have invented the term "graft." Unhappily, it is as widespread as it is deep-rooted. That Mexico is no exception is perfectly true. If years of revolutionary chaos, pillage and lawlessness were the real explanation of this deplorable phenomenon the friends of that country might well rejoice. But unhappily the cause lies deeper and cannot be displaced in a day or a year. And yet, oddly enough, the writer of these pages is acquainted with an American who invested many millions of dollars in that country without having paid one centavo in bribery. But for that one there are thousands of others who have a different story to tell.

It is more instructive than edifying to read the following remarks in one of the really independent press organs of the United States. The subject was the disclosures made by Mr. Untermyer: "His revelations are a tremendous blow at the present economic organisation of society. For he has established a number of highly important facts: First, wherever he has probed he has uncovered labour or capitalistic conspiracy, or corruption, or both, always at the cost of the public; second, he has proved the existence of ring after ring and ring within ring all in flat violation of law; third, he has proved that the United States Government has deliberately permitted these rings and combinations in restraint of trade to exist by prosecuting neither civilly nor criminally; and, fourth, he has proved where the sympathies of our courts lie in that every labour rascal whose prosecution he has brought about has been given a jail sentence, while every crooked business man has been let off with a fine."[13]

It would be difficult to frame a more sweeping indictment against a society than that and impossible to mark more clearly the character of a truly progressive and fearless press organ than by framing it; but the amazing exposé presented by Mr. Untermyer is worth mentioning here only because it connotes the depth and strength of corruption in such a model State as the North American Republic, whose mission is believed to be the ethical and economic guardianship of its neighbours. "The revelations of Mr. Untermyer," continues the journal already quoted, "reveal as conscienceless and unsocial a state of business life as could well be imagined. For the sake of private or corporate profit we behold an economic condition of lawlessness and cut-throat exploitation to give heart to every extreme advocate of social reconstruction who believes that our capitalistic system needs only a little more time to collapse of its own rottenness."[14]

If one assumes for a moment that equally vehement terms of condemnation are applicable to Mexicans, who by the way are not capitalists, by what country in the new world could they be appropriately uttered? Which of them is qualified to cast the first stone?

Protection for American business men who are engaged in legitimate commercial and industrial pursuits in Mexico is one of the staple postulates of those groups of companies and politicians in the United States who are striving to press their political programmes on their Government and their fellow-citizens. And it is perfectly legitimate. But if a league of Mexican patriots were to lay siege to the Teatro Arbeu in Mexico City, to picket for a whole day, to organise a riot lasting six hours and finally to put a violent end to the performance on the ground that the film on the screen was American-made and must be replaced by one taken in Mexico, with what feelings would the announcement be read by American patriots? Yet incidents of this kind are met with in the United States without evoking an emotional thrill. "The American Legion," we read in a Los Angeles newspaper, "at 8:40 o'clock last night won a complete victory in the first open fight in this country on the German-made film issue, when Hollywood Post, after a day of picketing and rioting lasting more than six hours, caused Miller's Theatre to stop its performance of the German-made 'Cabinet of Dr. Caligari' and to put in its place a Los Angeles-made film. The playhouse, which had started the picture early in the afternoon for a two weeks' run, capitulated only after it had been picketed for hours by hundreds of men in uniform and after the disturbance at its entrance had gone to such extremes that two mob rushes had been attempted, rotten eggs had been hurled, and police and provost guard forces had been reinforced until they numbered thirty-five men."

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[13] The (New York) *Nation*, July 6th, 1921.

[14] The (New York) *Nation*, July 6th, 1921. Another instance, taken from the New York *Times* of June 13, 1921, is worth a passing reference. Lewis F. Jacobson, counsel for Ascher Brothers, owners of a chain of moving picture houses in Chicago and vicinity, expressed to the Legislative Committee which is investigating business conditions in Chicago his belief that the theatre men of that city had been compelled to pay out approximately one hundred thousand dollars in graft.

"Ten days later the same newspaper announced that at a meeting of the Loyal American Film League it had been decided to send a representative to Chicago, New York, Washington and other cities in an effort to spread the campaign against German-made motion pictures." [15]

When reading these and similar disclosures about a well-ordered State whose official guides preach righteousness and aspire for their country to the moral overlordship of a Continent, we cannot but feel that we are living through a period when the foundations of political and social institutions are sapped and rotten, and caprice and self-delusion are taking their place. Some of the established landmarks of old-world civilisation are being moved, the cement of the social organism is crumbling and the place of ethical maxims is being usurped by the catchwords of cant and the unctuous jargon of pharisaism. The Governments and the press of the military and plutocratic States which rule the world to-day are apt to lay great stress upon justice, humanity, righteousness and

[15] The *Nation*, July 6th, 1921.

other lofty ideals and to allege these as the motives of policies which in truth render an approach to these ideals a sheer impossibility. Secretary Hughes announced that the fundamental issue between the United States Government and Mexico turns upon the safeguarding of property rights. In plainer words, the material rewards accruing to industrial initiative, however exaggerated they may appear in the light of the latter-day conceptions of private wealth and public needs, must take precedence over the material and spiritual welfare of an entire people. "There is no form of privilege and monopoly," writes an influential periodical [16] "so open to criticism as that in natural resources, which belong of right to the citizens of a country at large and to no particular group of men, much less to a group of outlanders. . . . Does not President Obregón's assertion mean something for Americans as well as Mexicans?

" 'We stand to-day,' writes Obregón, 'on the principle that the natural resources of a nation belong to the nation. Never again will the people of Mexico tolerate a Government that does not support this principle. . . . What Mexico will ask in the future is a fair partnership in development. We are through for ever with the policy of gift, graft and surrender.' "

The same journal, discussing the transition of natural rights into the legal phase of concessions granted, continues: "When in consequence of a development of civilisation natural resources come to possess a value undreamed of before, has not the Government the right to readjust the terms of the original grant in the interests of society at large? At one time no one questioned the right of a man to exclusive interest in the air above his land. With the invention of the aeroplane the interest of the community in this air leads to governmental action which is certainly retroactive. When this substance, as in the case of oil, becomes of such importance that it may be vital to national existence, does not a government's right to self-preservation extend to the recovery of title in return for a fair pecuniary compensation?

[16] The *New Republic*, July 13th, 1921.

"But these subtleties are ours—not President Obregón's. He says emphatically: 'Every private right acquired prior to May 1st, 1917, when the new Constitution was adopted, will be respected and fully protected. The famous Article 27, one clause of which declares the nation's ownership of subsoil rights in petroleum, will never be given retroactive effect, nor has it ever been given retroactive effect.'"

"Right," Mazzini tells us, "is the faith of the individual. Duty is the common collective faith. Right can but organise existence; it may destroy, it cannot found. Duty builds up, associates and unites. It is derived from a general law, whereas right is derived only from human will. There is nothing therefore to forbid a struggle against right." Nothing but might.

Respecting the protection of the lives of aliens in Mexico, on which Mr. Fall's Report laid so much stress, nothing more is heard for the time being. Mr. Hughes doubtless understands that excesses committed at the time of Madero and Huerta have passed into history as completely as the lynching of the eleven Italians by a mob in New Orleans in the year 1891. But it is not generally known in Europe that the murder of foreigners resident in the United States outside the Federal District, even though it amount to a massacre, is a crime which the Federal Courts of the United States are incompetent to try. Nay, if one of the States of the Union should violate an international treaty, the Federal tribunals may not take cognisance of it.[17] This is a fact well worthy of the attention of those who blame President Obregón for not taking action against the backsliding States of the Mexican Union.

It brings us face to face with the crux of the situation to-day—the obnoxious treaty which is to render recognition of the Obregón Government possible. The tenacity with which the demand is being pressed and the seemingly intense faith which is proclaimed in the force of a treaty—as though it possessed a sacramental virtue in this era of Haitian Conventions and other scraps of paper—compel one to ask what benefit a compact of that kind would import into the relations of the two countries? A covenant purporting to establish friendship between two governments, one of which constrains the other by economic strangulation to accept it, frankly deserves some other name. Its effect would hardly be friendship or cordiality, and it is somewhat difficult to apprehend the line of thought by which statesmen can have reached the conclusion that it would be that.

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[17] A Bill is now before the Senate to authorise Federal intervention to protect the treaty rights of aliens in the various States of the Union.

But eliminating the two essential aspects of means and end, and keeping solely to that of the force inherent in the form, one feels tempted to ask what difference a written compact would make to Mexico's international relations from any point of view worth considering. Would it add a moral to an international obligation? Hardly. Promises made under duress are seldom respected and never deemed to be obligatory in the political world, if they can be shirked or broken with impunity. This remark is not to be taken as a reflection upon either of the two Republics in question, but merely as an additional illustration of the mysterious nature of the predilection and respect which one of them displays for a formal bond in the case of the Mexican Republic, but repudiates in the case of the Haitian Republic. Involuntarily one asks what sort of a picture do those politicians conjure up in their mind's eye of the binding nature and enduring effects of a treaty generally.

A Mexican press organ contributes data for an answer. "In the United States," it writes, "there is much talk about a treaty, but seemingly no recollection of the circumstances that there is one actually in force to-day. It was signed by the two governments at the close of an unjust war in which the weaker was forced to surrender to the stronger one-half of its territory—a much harsher condition than any that was imposed by the victors on the vanquished after the four years' world war waged on the other shore of the Atlantic.

"And it may not be amiss to recall to mind Article XXI of that treaty, which runs: 'If unhappily at some future time any disagreement should arise between the governments of the two republics respecting the meaning of any stipulation of this treaty or any other aspect of the political or commercial relations of the two nations, the aforesaid Governments in their name undertake to endeavour in the most sincere and strenuous manner to settle the differences and to preserve *the state of peace and amity* hereby established between the two countries, and *to employ for this purpose reciprocal representations and pacific negotiations.* And should they not succeed in coming to an agreement by these means, *recourse will not on that account be had to reprisals, aggression or hostilities of any kind by one republic against the other,* until the government of the country which deems itself aggrieved has considered ripely and in a spirit of peace and good neighbourliness whether it would not be better *to compose the disaccord by arbitration of commissioners appointed by both parties or by a friendly nation.'* [18]

"And we might point out that this treaty was in force at the time when the military invaders landed at Vera Cruz and trod our territory on their so-called punitive excursions.

"And with all our blood transmuted into eloquence we might exclaim: 'How is it possible for us to conclude a treaty with a State which does not know how to respect a treaty?'

"In what thrilling tones might we say: 'The United States have taken part in a war against a people whose government treated as mere scraps of paper the covenants which it had signed with various States. To Belgium, the mutilated nation, went out the sympathy of the whole civilised world, which unanimously condemned the conduct of the German Empire towards a weak neighbour, who took it for granted that the promise registered in a scrap of paper was binding on its honour. And for what purpose? In order that the Republic of the North, which stood forth as the ally of right and justice, should treat its signature exactly as the German Empire had treated the scrap of paper which guaranteed Belgium's neutrality!'

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[18] This is not the original text of the article in English but a literal translation from the Spanish. As I am travelling in various countries I have been unable to get access to the English text.

"We might well say this and more. . . ."[19]

Quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi.

[19] *Excelsior* (Mexico), June 18th, 1921.

CHAPTER XX

ÓBREGON'S TASKS AND DIFFICULTIES

THE ancient Chinese teacher Confucius laid it down in one of his books that the good ordering of a political community depends upon the proper maintenance of five kinds of relations: those between father and son; between the eldest and the younger brothers; between friend and friend; between husband and wife, and between master and servant. Any serious derangement of these, he held, would of necessity throw the entire organisation out of gear. Contemporary history confirms the truth of the remark and extends its application. The anarchy which of late has thrown every nation of the globe into confusion is manifestly the result of a radical and, as many fear, permanent disturbance of all kinds of human relationship. Morality as a guide of conduct is persistently discarded in the mutual intercourse of nations, citizens, social classes, sexes, and of employers and employed. Every man's hand is raised against every other man and each organised group is intent upon the furtherance of its own interests to the exclusion of all others while doing lip homage to altruism. In a word, the cement which hitherto bound the elements of society together is fast losing its cohesiveness and civilisation in the forms in which it has progressed since the days of King Hamurabi and the builders of the Pyramids is seemingly doomed to undergo a radical change or vanish.

Sanguinary and decimating intestine feuds and wars—largely the outcome of foreign machinations—had reduced Mexico to a like distressing plight before the rest of the world began to experience it, and now that internal conditions in that Republic are becoming exceptionally favourable to reconstruction and progress the world-wave of anarchy threatens to roll over it with elemental force and can be kept out only by drastic and well-timed measures, to which, if they are to become efficacious, her neighbours who are mainly answerable for her condition must also contribute wholeheartedly.

The bulk of the Mexican people are as God made and man marred them. Their inborn qualities, which are many and excellent, have never had a fair chance to develop. In shaking off the Spanish yoke they showed that they knew how to die, but their subsequent political experiments proved them to be imperfectly qualified to live in a progressive self-governing community. Nor was this either surprising or blameworthy. For their Spanish rulers had left them in a condition similar to that in which some haciendados keep their dependents to this day, benighted, squalid, listless and fatalistic. And one hesitates to affirm that any of the many changes brought about by foreign influence since then has raised them to a permanently higher level. Under the Spanish rule there was no political plan, no administrative machinery, nought in the nature of self-government or of public opinion, to serve as models, nothing in short but a number of costly agencies organised to harvest in cheaply and despatch safely to foreign ports as much as possible of the wealth of the country, leaving the people indigent and desperate. And to-day the same process is going on under another name, American oil men occupying the place of the Spanish wealth-exporters. Ethnically the country has progressed perceptibly.

During the century which has elapsed since the declaration of independence Mexico has gone far towards producing a truly national type—a blend of the various ethnic fragments, mostly Indian and Spanish—to which immigration on a large scale is fast adding various European strains. To this phenomenon and its tangible results there is probably nothing comparable in any other part of the American Continent, nor indeed with the sole exception of Russia in any quarter of the globe to-day. Into its significance, which is likely to prove far reaching in the future struggle of races, neither American nor European statesmen have yet had the leisure or the desire to inquire. The fusion of the races, although still in flux, is visibly resulting in the rise of a wholly new people, whose temper, aptitudes, moral fibre and intellectual capacities differ considerably from those of the individual races of whose union they are the fruit. Unhappily, despite the absolute social and political equality of all the ethnic constituents of the population, the mestizos, now the most numerous element, has been as stunted in its mental and moral development as the Indian. The common people generally have had no fair chance to outgrow the superstitions, prejudices and narrow outlook upon the world with which the Spanish invasion found and the Carranza régime left them. Natural evolution has been checked among them systematically. Racial ties, instincts, temperament, use and wont, perpetuated by geographical isolation and artificial restrictions, kept them bound to a past which had little or nothing in common with the progressive aspirations and ideals of the great onward-moving world outside their own. And so they remained adult children incapable of using the many organs of knowledge and advancement with which other nations were so well equipped. And they were kept unconscious of their loss. The only seed that has been scattered among them since the roots of their religious faith were loosened is of foreign origin and nonconstructive tendency, and it is a matter of surprise that it has not perceptibly thriven and brought forth fruit, the conditions being so auspicious. It is not, however, the fault of the revolutionaries that, born to gloom and misery, they instinctively made for such stray gleams of light as happened to pierce through the murk around them, nor are they answerable for the quality of this light which is sometimes of the nether regions. Now suddenly to apply foreign political coercion to such a mass of impulsive and wrathful humans would be like setting a lighted torch to a heap of tinder in a powder magazine.

The lower orders of the Mexican people are not only unsophisticated and politically listless, but they are also poor, underfed, improvident, and over large tracts of country, especially in the South, physically degenerating. Their huts are eyesores, —little traps of infection, and so tiny and bare that, as the Russian peasants used to say of their own wretched abodes, the inmates "have neither the space in which to hang themselves nor the wherewithal to cut their throats." It can hardly appear surprising therefore that many of the wretches thus brought into the world only to pass through the slow-grinding mill of disease, misery and pain, have abandoned their belief in a hell to follow such a life of suffering. The happiest among them are the dead, could they but realise it. It is fair to add that the living seldom exaggerate the value of existence and answer the death-call as readily as did the ancient Greeks. In the streets of cities and villages lepers commingle freely with the population without a challenge from the authorities or a protest from their fellow townsmen. I have actually seen them stalking the streets and begging alms unchecked in more than one town. The main cause of this woeful neglect is lack of funds which the United States Government is perpetuating, with excellent intentions and these sinister effects.

It is obvious that abstract ideas, however respectable and attractive, can make but little impress on the minds of men and women so circumstanced. Only corporeal needs and material baits can goad or lure them to fitful action with the promise of immediate results. They rallied in their thousands around condottieri like Villa, Chávez, Pascual Orozco and others who could tempt them with loot and reward them with promotion, and they lavished their attachment and loyalty upon these chiefs with a rare degree of self-sacrifice. But like the average Russian of Tsarist days and not unlike some branches of the Latin race they entertain a distorted notion of liberty which they often confound with absolute license.

The political domain in the Republic throughout those years of rapid decay was monopolised by the semi-intellectuals—a dangerous class in any loosely cemented society—men of narrow horizons, no special attainments, insatiable ambitions and egotistic instincts. They lived not in the future or the past but exclusively in the present. None of them, not even Carranza himself, was endowed with the vision, the sense of proportion or the serenity of mind necessary to survey a distant horizon. Many of the partisans of the Government were past or prospective rebels, and until Obregón gave a new meaning to the word "revolution" nearly every rebel was first cousin to a brigand. The unity of the army was riven by the spirit of pronunciamientos; the judicature was discredited by its abject dependence on the Executive; the State departments were marts for graft. Industry, trade and commerce oscillated in rhythm with the uncertainty respecting the financial burdens to which they were liable and with the fitfulness of the open and covert attacks to which they were subjected by bandits, rebels and dishonest rivals backed or connived at by the authorities. Hardly any of the principal *dramatis personæ* of Mexican history has made lasting contributions to the social or moral advancement of the nation, and none but Benito Juarez ventured upon helpful experiments in the difficult art of governance. Most of them were deficient in disciplined intelligence and lacked a trained sense of measure. Nor did any of them except Juarez attempt systematically to combine humanitarian interests with the nation's immediate requirements. Hence their influence, when beneficent, flitted swiftly like a lightning-flash, leaving the gloom through which it broke as dense and dreary as before.

The necessity of governing, if possible with, and in any case for, the people as a whole, was never thoroughly grasped by any of the former Presidents except Juarez. For most of the others the bulk of the population was merely a means, not an end. And as for those gifted individuals who under normal conditions might have made valuable contributions to the cause of progress they were but as foam on the revolutionary wave. During all this period of warfare and confusion the great mass of the nation yearned for peace. The various leaders were ready to die for it. But few of them were content to live and work for it.

One can readily understand the arduous nature of the task, and the slowness of the process, of transforming a people thus floundering in an ooze of political decomposition into an orderly, industrious, self-restrained and law-abiding society. Yet that is the concrete problem with which General Obregón has now to cope at the end of a purifying revolution. The utmost a successful revolution can accomplish is to remove the obstacles to renovation. Only the liberators and the people in concert can displace the effects of these and begin to build.

And there is no grounded hope that a tidal wave of circumstance will roll in and bear the much suffering Mexican people to new and fruitful shores. There is but one road to reform and it is rugged and beset with natural hindrances. Unhappily in Mexico's case foreign Governments have blocked it with artificial barriers, rendering it wholly impassable. And they intensify the injury by claiming credit for humanitarian motives.

General Obregón is confronted with perplexing problems drawn from every conceivable sphere: from the domains of foreign policy, internal legislation, constitutional law, national economy, railways and waterways, labour, finance, the army. And some of these are uncommonly delicate. True, the new President is gifted with an unusual stock of common or rather uncommon sense, with the rare quality of leadership, and, although still young, has vast stores of experience to draw upon. This is another striking instance of his personal luck. For "experience," as the Turkish proverb puts it, "is usually a comb presented to us by destiny when our hair is all gone." But while genius in a statesman can achieve much, it cannot achieve everything. The greatest kneader of human wills when charged with reconstructive work depends for results very largely upon those to whose lot it falls to translate his ideas into acts. Even an autocrat is to that extent restricted in the exercise of his power, just as a skilled artisan finds his natural limitations in the materials and the implements of which he disposes. And whether General Obregón will find enough coadjutors and subordinates of the right kind for a task of this magnitude remains to be seen.

One day when we were travelling through the Southern States and talking of the physical deterioration of the inhabitants which I ascribed primarily to deplorable foreign influences, I asked General Obregón what, in his opinion, was the first step towards reconstruction. He replied at once: "The people must be taught to eat, drink and house themselves properly. They have wrong notions on these subjects and the right ideas must be instilled into them methodically. This may sound fanciful but it is painfully true. They are chronically underfed, yet they do not realise it. They often receive food unfit for human consumption, but instead of spurning they partake of it and put up with the consequences, which are frequently disease and occasionally death. They are miserably lodged, yet make no exertion to acquire hygienic or comfortable dwellings. They are among the most prolific people on the globe, yet the population remains almost stationary owing to the appalling death-rate among the children. Over vast stretches of the country the physical type has gone off to an alarming degree. The individual is listless, his initiative is atrophied, his activity fitful and unsustained. In a word he lacks enterprise and perseverance, and has hardly any grit. Now, as you know, the arts, the sciences, in fact all the cultural acquisitions which go with these, presuppose a certain standard of material well-being which our people are far from having reached. To help them attain that must be our foremost care."

On another occasion he said in reply to a kindred query: "The reforms which Mexico needs require at least four factors for their complete solution: time, capital, education and a directing hand. And I should like to add that the seemingly longest road to renovation is in truth the shortest, for in rebuilding a vast social organism one cannot improvise with safety."

Of all the tasks awaiting General Obregón that which will most severely strain his ingenuity and resourcefulness is the transformation of the revolutionary Republic with which the world has so long been acquainted into a pacific and well ordered community. And it is by far the most urgent and momentous. Mexico must become an elective, law-abiding commonwealth on pain of extinction as a sovereign State. The alternatives are as certainly these as if fate had embodied them in a formal decree promulgated *urbi et orbi.*

The vices and propensities which years of savage warfare and unbridled license have engrafted on the soul of a section of the population cannot be eradicated in a few months, still less can they be displaced by a mere change of régime or the enactment of wise laws. This matter of converting the Republic from a revolutionary into a pacific State General Obregón is wont to refer to as the "suppression of lawless personal ambitions," and from the very outset of his presidential career he set to work to deal with it energetically as occasion arose.

Many of the measures which he has adopted since his advent to power challenge the approbation of all who have Mexico's well-being at heart. But they only touch the fringe of the corrosive evil which must be eradicated once for all if the Republic is to maintain its sovereignty intact. And the first step is a correct diagnosis. Arbitrary government is not the most potent dissolvent of a State; it is anarchy, which offers an almost irresistible temptation to an ambitious or an order-loving neighbour to intervene. It was anarchy that disintegrated the Polish Republic. It was anarchy and not despotism that destroyed the French monarchy and rendered the revolution at once possible and inevitable. And anarchy, political, social and moral—far more than the irresponsible rule of Carranza, Huerta or Diaz,—is directly responsible for most of Mexico's misfortunes. The appearance on the scene of a born leader of men like General Obregón, however genial he may be, will prove but a parenthesis in the annals of the anarchist state, unless he succeed in changing the system root and branch. And this is tantamount to saying that he must bring about a complete revolution in the disposition of that section of the population which has hitherto supplied the breakers of law and the disturbers of order. Here again his most artful thwarters are working in a friendly country under the ægis of a foreign flag.

If Obregón were suddenly to pass away to-day, his work and the best fruits of the revolution would vanish with him. The men in whom down to a few months ago the spirit of rebellion, lawlessness and destruction was incarnate would once more unsheath their swords, mount their chargers and inaugurate another—and this time the last and fatal—period of civil strife in Mexican history. As long as Obregón continues to direct the affairs of his country peace and order may be deemed to be secure. That, however, is not long enough. The test of a great ruler is so to govern the State and educate its members as ultimately to enable it to dispense with his services. Unless he does this he has accomplished nothing durable. Only if General Obregón can transform the revolutionary Republic into a law-abiding state, in which the supreme power is transmitted by legal procedure, will he have achieved the most important part of his mission. And of this necessity he is perfectly aware. But the reforms which it entails not merely in the administration but in certain of the basic laws are so radical that one wonders whether under actual conditions they are likely to be realised.

I have often talked with him on this topic and his conceptions seemed to me on the whole perfectly sound. Although neither a historian nor a politician, his views of contemporary history and politics are those of a man who has deeply meditated on the course of human affairs and their larger aspects, and who firmly grasps the main factors in the politico-social currents of his time. He realises—much more fully than do most European statesmen—the interdependence of peoples and their unconscious but continuous approximation toward an informal community of the whole human race based on the highest interests of each. His own ideal is a universal civil society cemented by justice, and his belief in its ultimate establishment is unshaken by recent events. His active undersense and feeling of the whole, joined to a keen understanding of the integral parts, constantly impels him so to adjust the interests of his country to those of humanity that the two can be closely associated. This is the quality which distinguishes him from the best of his predecessors in the presidency, entitles him to a foremost place among the best statesmen of modern times and warrants the high hopes entertained of his work by those who know his views and appreciate his intentions. A subject on which I hold an opinion that may possibly provoke dissent among my Mexican friends is the federal State-system. With all the diffidence becoming a foreigner I venture to give it as my firm conviction that the maintenance of Mexico's sovereignty will be found to be incompatible with the perpetuation of that clumsy arrangement.

Approaching the subject of reconstruction from a different and less ideal starting-point, General Obregón realises the imperative need of exceptional wariness and circumspection on the part of a weak and wealthy country whose neighbour is powerful, progressive, and enterprising. The motive is obvious. Unless the feebler nation contrive to conduct itself with passable seemliness at home and with extreme consideration for its neighbour abroad, it is certain to end by being taken in hand and tutored by the latter. But even under the most favourable circumstances its troubles are likely to be so many and occasionally so distracting that the temptation is almost irresistible to seek an effective counterpoise to these drawbacks abroad. Such a course—legally open to every independent nation—must appear especially attractive to Mexico. President Carranza was so enamoured of the idea that he seriously purposed realising it by acceding to the specious proposals laid before him by Germany during the war. And it is probable that he would have closed with them definitely had it not been for the vigorous opposition which he encountered from General Obregón whom he consulted as the destined commander-in-chief of the Mexican forces. Obregón's view of the matter was at once realistic and sound. He characterised the suggested course of action as nationally suicidal and therefore refused to countenance it by word or deed. And when Carranza emphasised the promises made by the German Government and the benefits which it undertook to confer upon Mexico, he irreverently exclaimed: "Yes, Germany will help us as the clergyman helps the agonising man by commending him to the protection of the Most High."

His conception of the line of action imposed by present world conditions upon his country is this: "Mexico is the neighbour of the United States, whose Government rendered her precious help—now too readily forgotten—in the revolt against the Spanish dominion. It is our imperative duty and, therefore, our interest to cultivate neighbourly relations with her Government and people and to show them every sort of consideration compatible with the independence, dignity and interests of the nation. Consequently, the notion of seeking in foreign alliances or in military conventions an arm of defence against future contingencies from that quarter, contingencies which should never be allowed to arise, would be not merely bootless but provocative and ultimately disastrous. Military force at home directed to this end is equally out of the question. And yet it is certain that we need some kind of neutralising agency. To my thinking the one sheet-anchor of defence for a country situated as is ours must be sought and will be found in the esteem and good will of our next-door neighbour and of the entire civilised world. There is and can be none other. And to win this by her exemplary conduct should be Mexico's first care. Morality and might are now contending for the mastery of the globe. The struggle is desperate and its outcome will affect us, together with all the lesser nations. If morality prevail, as we hope and desire, all will be well with Mexico, seeing that that is, and will continue to be, the keystone of her own policy in the new era. But if force should win the palm, nothing can save the weaker peoples and we shall go under together with these. Switzerland offers a useful object-lesson in the difficult art of making friends and conciliating potential enemies. During the World War she was beset with tremendous perils and strong temptations but by dint of endeavouring honestly to discharge her duties towards each of her neighbours she compelled the respect of all. Mexico is in like manner wholly dependent upon the moral sympathy and support of the civilised world and must, therefore, bend her efforts to acquire them. Consequently, it behooves her to see that the epoch of revolutionary changes passes into history, and to inaugurate an era of well established order and law."

No Mexican whom I have met or heard of has discerned so clearly or defined so precisely the only helpful course of action open to his country. One of the aids to this discernment is the accurate perspective in which the new President visualises the history of his native land and foreshadows its potential future. He is wont as we saw to contemplate Mexico as a part of the great human family which, although still in process of formation, may be looked upon already as a reality for all the purposes of a far-sighted national and international policy. His mental picture of the country is not marred by the slightest tinge of that chauvinism whcih inspires the writings and discourses of some of his countrymen. There is neither mistiness in his perception nor vacillation in his action. Thus he is keenly mindful of the noteworthy part played by the United States in supporting the Mexicans against their Spanish masters and likewise of the undeniable boons bestowed upon his fellow countrymen by the band of enterprising pioneers from the great northern Republic and from European lands who discovered and developed Mexico's mineral and agricultural resources. Of these services he always speaks with gratitude, the sincerity of which is vouched for by his earnest desire to secure the friendly co-operation of those same foreign peoples in the coming work of reorganisation. For he regards Mexico, the wealth of its lands and the still undeveloped energies of its population as a trust for humanity. Nor does he ever fail, when discussing these matters with his countrymen, to emphasise the deciding fact that unless those material and spiritual resources are rationally exploited and made available so that they may be duly shared with humanity at large, they are certain to be fructified by others who have the will and the power to make prompt and proper use of them. And it is not only the riches of the soil and subsoil that must thus be developed and turned into the common stock,—the energies of the people, their mental and moral capacities which have for ages been artificially checked and dwarfed must likewise be cultivated, disciplined and fitted for their part in the task of national reconstruction and international rearrangement.

In a word, General Obregón keeps a death grip on a political faith calculated to awaken a response from spiritual depths never reached by any of his predecessors. His detestation of war as a satisfactory method of settling disputes is worthy of the most enthusiastic pacifist and comes with immense force from the successful military leader who put down anarchy and is thoroughly conversant with the generous selflessness and lofty altruism which so often characterise the soldier in the field. Force, bloodshed and every kind of destructiveness are abominations to him. He sees in them the fetters that have kept his country from moving forward with the progressive races and these from reaching still distant goals. And the lesson drawn from his own experience which he yearns to impress upon his fellow countrymen is that respect for law, a certain degree of self-abnegation for the common good, and the substitution of moral relationship in the dealings of man with man and nation with nation for the savage state of nature, constitute the only solid basis for that process of renovation which is Mexico's last hope. On this foundation President Obregón is minded to build up his policy. But unless he is ably seconded by men of his own stamp and by the people at large he may not succeed. In any and every case, however, he will play his part worthily to the end. To employ another Turkish saying, if he must drown it will be in clear water.

But however comprehensive and statesmanlike Obregón's programme of domestic reforms may be, the real work of reconstruction can hardly even be started until and unless the misunderstandings between Mexico and the United States are cleared away. And in this process the next move depends upon the latter country, which has had all its grounded claims recognised and is now holding out for what can add nothing to its own legitimate satisfaction and would utterly ruin Mexico's last hope of regeneration.

Justice is another of the public functions the administration of which the new President is intent on rendering simpler, speedier and sounder. The matter is fundamental. No State can thrive for long in which the tribunals and judges lack the confidence of the people. Destroy that confidence and you have struck a deadly blow at the very heart of the organism. And justice in Mexico has hitherto been open to grave charges. The Supreme Court itself has long been known to be swayed by the Executive. It was thus even in the time of Porfirio Diaz. He often influenced it in order to secure such decisions as seemed to him just and possibly were so. It is worth noting that the American press which has recently laid stress[1] on the need for this reform had no complaints to make on the subject so long as the irregularities were committed in favour of their own countrymen. It is only the clamour of the latter that has called forth its scathing criticism and vehement condemnation. So long as the sufferers were merely the natives, justice found no champion outside their country. Its cause becomes worthy of vindication only when bound up with the interests of foreign companies and influential individuals. Considering the moral, intellectual and political anarchy in which the population existed for so many years, one could not reasonably have expected the administration of justice to have escaped unscathed. One does not look for hot water under the ice. "Why is your neck crooked?" some one inquired of the camel. "What have I straight?" was the answer.

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[1] See Articles in the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* and other periodicals by Mr. Stephen Bonsal, for example.

Judicial procedure too is antiquated, complex and abounds in delays,—all drawbacks which favour the law-breaker and the wealthy and often defeat the ends of justice. It has also called into being a band of unscrupulous pettifogging lawyers whose principal function is to frustrate the intentions of the lawgivers. And they very often succeed.

The agrarian and labour ferment throughout the country could be satisfactorily disposed of were the demands of the discontented elements prompted by intelligent self-interest and moderated by a sense of equity. And in all cases in which they answer to this description they are being settled promptly and fairly. For General Obregón's views on both subjects are eminently sane. He favours a just equilibrium of labour, capital and intelligence, three factors all equally indispensable to the success of industry and agriculture and none of which can be eliminated without serious damage to the community. But in many cases the demands spring from a different source and cannot be complied with economically, nor could they be settled with finality even were compliance possible. One branch of the movement is akin to bolshevism in its origin, subversive in its aims and disastrous in its methods. But like most of Mexico's tribulations it hails from abroad. It was planned and is fostered mainly by foreigners who are neither workmen, artisans nor husbandmen but professional agitators, who scatter broadcast leaflets and booklets of the most seditious nature plausibly written and cleverly adapted to the comprehension of working men, peasants, soldiers and the semi-intellectual youth of the country.

By way of indulging my curiosity about the relation between elementary education and the working of universal suffrage I made inquiries in the most advanced State of the Republic, Tamaulipas, which offers a fair test. Tamaulipas has more schools in proportion to its population and has had them for a longer period than any other State of the Union. As far back as the year 1884 an educational law was enacted there and is still in force which gave a considerable impetus to schools. Well, I ascertained that the effects of this praiseworthy initiative had been frustrated by the revolutionary excesses to such a degree that during the elections of 1920 no votes could be legally recorded in certain cantons for lack of overseers able to read and write. The law requires that two men who can read and write be appointed in every canton to preside at the voting. But in several of these cantons, for instance in that of Jaumave which is not far from the capital of the State, there were not two men to be found who could fulfil this condition. And in consequence polling booths could not be opened there. In other places where two citizens credited with these attainments were available, it happened that they did not understand what they read and fell into various irregularities which warranted the annulment of the elections. Owing to the frequent occurrence of similar illegalities, I am assured, many an election can be annulled at will, and as the returns are submitted to the Chamber itself for confirmation or invalidation, it is most often party interest that decides. It is affirmed that a formal compact exists between a party in one of the houses of the legislature and certain members of that body in virtue of which the latter are invariably declared legally elected no matter how few votes they may have received and that in consequence some of these privileged democrats spare themselves the trouble and expense of an electioneering campaign, content themselves with a minority of the votes however small and get themselves elected by their friends in the legislature by having the votes given to their opponents nullified on technical grounds.

In Mexico a smaller percentage of the population than in Belgium grasps the significance of the suffrage, knows how to exercise it or is willing to go to the polls. The remedy for this lies either in disfranchising illiterates or educating them at high pressure as ignorant immigrants are being instructed in the United States. The latter alternative is now being tried under adverse conditions but with energy and perseverence.[2]

At the Constituent Assembly of Querétaro where the Constitution was drafted and adopted, one representative whose name deserves to be remembered, General Esteban Calderón, insisted on the necessity of restricting the suffrage to those who were qualified to exercise it and made a concrete proposal to this effect. But in that Assembly of enthusiasts the voice of this realist was drowned in dithyrambic phrases. It has since been affirmed that the millions of illiterate and listless voters constitute a grave peril to the State.[3] They are said to be the unconscious tools of scheming agitators who foment local tumults and lawlessness in the intervals of revolutionary upheavals. It is argued that they are not only themselves incapable of voting deliberately but are active in nullifying the suffrage of those who are fully qualified to exercise it. The little Republic of Guatemala was until recently face to face with the same problem. Of its two and a half million inhabitants some two millions are imperfectly civilised aborigines who are wanting in the most rudimentary notions about governance and policy. But the Guatemaltecans recently excluded all illiterates from the voting booths, on the principle that it is more democratic to prepare voters in advance for the exercise of their rights than to render those rights nugatory by bestowing them upon individuals who cannot comprehend them, still less exercise them rationally.[4]

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[2] A campaign against illiteracy is being carried on under the joint direction of President Obregón and the Rector of the University.

[3] Italian statesmen, it is fair to remember, think otherwise. Shortly before the war Premier Giolitti had a bill passed in both houses of the legislature, by which several millions of illiterates were admitted to the vote.

[4] See *El Universal,* 27 Jan. 1921.

According to the Mexican Constitution, each of the federal entities is a sovereign State, with its legislature, elective Governor, Secretary and the usual host of employees who absorb the substance of the people and not only give nothing valuable in return but very often open the sluices for the revolutionary flood to sweep away the produce of labour and thrift. Two of these sovereign States have an insignificant population of 78,000 and 85,000 souls respectively,[5] four of them less than 200,000;[6] nine have more than 200,000 but less than half a million. In five States the population exceeds 500,000 without totalling one million and in the whole Republic only four States can boast of a million inhabitants. Now if one deducts, as is meet, from these numbers the women, the numerous children, and the still more numerous illiterates, it will be seen that the dangerous instrument—in this case, weapon—of power is in the hands of a few, often-times harebrained individuals who are lured by the two-fold prospect of lording it over their next-door neighbours and making a comfortable livelihood without having put forth any exertion to deserve a Government post or even qualified themselves to occupy it. Many of these State dignitaries are primitive beings in the full sense of the term who are incapable of perceiving either the fatuity of their aspirations or the tragi-comedy of their failure. Hardihood they possess in the superlative degree, the hardihood to trample under foot every law and to ride roughshod over every right in maintaining their own privileges. Every one of these arbitrary dispensers of emoluments and offices is a sort of tsarlet at the head of a little army of State functionaries who in turn have their deputies and substitutes and occasionally their Pretorian guards. Thus Mexico is burdened with over thirty separate Governments and specifically political parliaments besides the various municipalities which are also centres of political and other machinations.

In Yucatan the recent elections let loose passions suggestive of prehistoric ages. The best organised and most resolute party there were the so-called Socialists and they distinguished themselves by mowing down their political adversaries with rifles, blowing them up with dynamite, hewing them with hatchets, clubbing them to death with sticks, carrying their dead bodies on poles, reducing their dwellings to ashes and sending disguised gendarmes to impersonate voters. General Calles himself exclaimed: "It looks as though the competitors in the struggle now going forward were not human beings but beasts, such is the wild fury with which they attack, maim and slaughter each other."[7] Yucatan, it is fair to add, is an exception. Its lamentable plight is the result of special conditions with which we are not now concerned. But the evils of the federal system are widespread and paralysing.

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[5] Colima and Campeche.

[6] Aguascalientes, Morelos, Tabasco and Nayarit.

Two Constitutional reforms then are peremptorily called for: the qualification of the citizen for the franchise, and the strengthening and tightening of the bonds between the people and the Government by the abolition of the sovereignty of the federal units and the substitution of Municipalities which, if they are first adequately reformed, can discharge many of the State functions much more satisfactorily and with a great deal less friction.

In the Republic there cannot be a smoothly working State so long as the provinces continue to enjoy the rights of sovereign communities. The sovereignty of these different centres promotes regionalism, fosters distracting feuds, hinders the growth of common interests and the pursuit of common purposes and may, at any of the critical conjunctures in which Mexican history abounds, lead to separatism and disintegration. In favour of the autonomy of a number of petty States each containing only the population of a European parish, composed largely of poverty-stricken individuals dispersed over a vast territory, devoid of political knowledge and training and even of elementary instruction, the grounds adduced were never convincing. And they are so weak to-day as hardly to need refutation. For the federal units are admittedly the germ centres of the revolutionary fever which has for long been consuming the energies of the population.

During the brief period that has passed since his inauguration the new President has swept away some of the worst abuses, drafted a series of excellent schemes which are gradually being inscribed on the statute book and accomplished more in the direction of reforms than was done by the best of his predecessors during their whole term of office. The masterly way in which he checkmated the railway strikers won for him a high tribute of universal praise. He has closed gambling houses and other haunts of vice, has begun to purge the prisons which were seminaries of crime and has adopted a series of measures for the reformation of criminals. Further, he has issued a number of hygienic regulations in various parts of the Republic and has put disinfecting apparatus in forty towns and the principal ports. He has begun the irrigation of vast tracts of land in Guanajuato, framed a law for disposing of the agrarian movement, given orders for the preservation and expansion of ancient crafts and industries, laid extensive plans for improving communications by land and water, bettered the railway services and laid a bill for the creation of a merchant marine before Congress. The problems of colonisation by foreign immigrants has also received careful attention and comprehensive arrangements have already been made for the sifting, classification and reception of many thousands of husbandmen from Canada, Italy, Germany, Austria and other countries, to whom considerable inducements are being offered during the first years of their residence in the Republic. The army is being rapidly demobilised and has already been reduced to fifty thousand men, the strength adequate for a minor State whose sheet-anchor of safety is henceforward to be the moral support of the civilised world.

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[7] *Excelsior* and other journals of the capital, November 9, 1920.

The numerous misunderstandings with foreign governments, corporations and citizens have likewise been closely studied in a spirit of equity and with a sincere desire to deal fairly by all. The national debt has been recognised and means considered for resuming payment of the interest. A plan for meeting the demands of foreign residents who sustained losses

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[8] It is right to say that this scheme was originally thought out by Carranza who first laid down the principle involved. General Obregón has merely resolved to redeem the promises of his predecessor.

during the Revolution has also been formulated and will be duly acted upon.[8]

This list of tasks achieved or undertaken in the brief span of two months might be further expanded, but it is sufficient to indicate the sincerity of purpose, the intenseness of the labour and the rapidity of method which the new President has displayed. He is evidently conscious that the events of his first year of office will impart its definite cast to the conjuncture which will make the Mexican Republic or unmake it. If, as one ardently hopes, his quickness of political intuition match his popularity and be equalled by his power, the country will be saved from within and may look forward to a period of material prosperity and cultural progress. He is working with the knowledge that there is no time to be lost. The march of events is uncommonly swift. The Mexican Government can no more be slow and sure than can a watch. This is well understood by the President but not by the bulk of Mexican demagogues who have yet to exchange the temper and the dialect of parochial politics for the classic language of constructive statesmanship. Delay or vacillation may spell disaster, and when Fate arrives on the scene the most genial statesman becomes a mere puppet.

On one of our journeys I remarked to General Obregón that an idealist who is this and nothing more can afford to dispense with concrete success and content himself with sowing that others may reap, but that a reforming statesman must necessarily be able to point to tangible results. Soon afterwards he was publicly congratulated by an orator on his electoral triumph, whereupon he replied: "For the people it is indeed a triumph to have cast off the shackles of the dictatorship and I am happy to have had a hand in bringing that about. My election, however, does not give me the feeling of being in a triumphal chariot but rather that of being harnessed to the wagon of the nation. I am on probation. For my triumph I must look not to the day on which I was chosen but to the hour when I lay down office and then only if I am able to ask the people without misgivings as to their answer: 'Have I done my duty and served you faithfully according to my lights and possibilities?' "

CHAPTER XXI

THE FALL FROM GRACE IN HAITI

THE experiment made by the United States in Haiti has burned itself into the souls of all Central Americans. Mexico in particular has special grounds for apprehension. President Zamor of Haiti was put through the mill which is now believed to be awaiting some Mexican President less resolute and powerful than Obregón. He was offered help from the United States to keep himself in power, but refused to compromise the independence of his country and resigned.[1]

Haiti, like Mexico, was summoned to sign a treaty with the United States, but the Haitian Senate refused. The new President was denied recognition unless he first sent a Commission to Washington for the purpose of signing "satisfactory protocols" relating to various questions, notably a convention for the control of the Haitian custom houses with the United States. The same condition confronts Mexico, as we gather from the scheme propounded by the international committee of bankers,[2] which by a curious coincidence is of the same mind as Mr. Fall and the National Association for the Protection of American Rights in Mexico. In the proposal for the refunding of Mexico's debt and the supplying of capital for new developments we find among the conditions "the pledging of the national customs revenue as security for the whole debt, and the administration of the customs revenue by a joint commission or international board of representatives of the United States and Mexico." [3] In other words, what is planned is a financial and political protectorate, in which the bankers will hold the natural resources of the country and the railroads, expending their "loans" to promote their own enterprises, where the bankers collect the revenues, the bankers supervise the disbursements, the bankers dictate the policies of a puppet government—their rule made good by the armed might of the American people.[4]

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[1] October 29th, 1914.

[2] It consists of ten American, five French and five British bankers.

[3] I learn that it has been somewhat modified since and that the Banco Nacional would be substituted for the joint commission.

The entire story of the dealings of the United States with Haiti from the year 1914 to the present day deserves to be made known throughout the length and the breadth of the globe, in the interests of the American people whose fair name they tarnish. Some of the alleged horrors, had they been perpetrated by a Tsarist Government against Poles or Jews or revolutionists, would have provoked a howl of indignation among civilised peoples. Does the circumstance that they are charged against a democratic Republic which aspires to the moral leadership of the world purge them of their iniquitous character? "No graver indictment of an American administration," writes an honest New York press organ, "has ever been made. . . . The atrocities . . . murder of women and children, wholesale killing of prisoners, torture with red-hot irons, the 'water-cure,' arson, robbery . . . constitute an everlasting stain on American honour." [5]

The initial procedure of the United States towards Haiti resembles in most essentials the methods employed against Mexico and includes the same systematic misleading propaganda, the same financial thumb-screw, a similar demand for a treaty or convention for the purpose of strengthening "the amity existing between them by the most cordial co-operation in measures for their common advantage." The United States Government demanded the control of the Haitian custom houses and the right to exercise a veto against future modifications of customs duties. The Haitian Government, like the Obregón administration, declined to sign such a covenant on the ground that it would be tantamount to placing the Republic under a foreign protectorate.[6] Thereupon the

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[4] See Article by J. K. Turner in the New York *Nation,* June 1st, 1921.

[5] *The Nation,* May 18th, 1921.

[6] On December 19, 1914. These and the following details are taken from a Memoir presented on the part of the Republic of Haiti to the Washington State Department and to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on May 5th, 1921.

American Minister notified the Haitian authorities that his Government would not insist upon the treaty.

"Two days previous to this communication from Mr. Bailly-Blanchard, in order to force the Haitian Government to accept the control of the custom houses by systematically depriving it of financial resources, American marines carried off the strong-boxes of the National Bank of the Republic of Haiti in broad daylight and took on board the gunboat Machias a sum of $500,000 belonging to the Republic of Haiti and destined to be used for the redemption of paper money. In his notes of December 19 and 26 the State Secretary of Foreign Affairs asked in vain for explanations from the United States Legation regarding this military kidnapping of the funds of the Haitian Treasury. This amount is still in the United States, where it was transported and deposited in a New York bank.

"On July 29 the population awoke to learn that the territory of Haiti was invaded by American forces which had landed at the extreme south of the city the night before. Hundreds and soon thousands of American marines occupied the town and disarmed the surprised Haitians who were completely bowled over by the terrible events of the last two days—and so the American forces did not meet with any resistance from the population. Two weeks passed, during which the landed forces succeeded in getting control of Port-au-Prince and its immediate vicinity. Meanwhile other American troops had occupied the city of Cap-Haitien, in the northern part of the country. On August 12, 1915, after numerous conferences between leading members of the Haitian Chamber and Senate and the American naval authorities, at the United States Legation and elsewhere, a Presidential election was held by permission of the Occupation, and M. Dartiguenave, president of the Senate, was elected, the majority of the members of the two houses agreeing to support him. It was made clear that the choice of M. Dartiguenave was essentially agreeable to the American Occupation. He was therefore elected for a term of seven years in accordance with the Haitian Constitution then in force.

"Two days after the establishment of the new Government, Mr. Robert Beale Davis, Jr., American chargé d'affaires, in the name of his Government, presented to President Dartiguenave a project for a treaty. This project was accompanied by a memorandum in which the President was informed 'that the State Department of Washington expected that the Haitian National Assembly, warranting the sincerity and the interest of the Haitians, would immediately pass a resolution authorising the President of Haiti to accept the proposed treaty without modification.' Since this request indicated a certain ignorance of Haitian constitutional practice, as regards the negotiations of treaties, the Government hastened to call Mr. Davis' attention to the article of the Constitution relating to this subject, and showed him that the President of Haiti did not need special authority of the Chambers to negotiate and sign treaties with a foreign Power.

"The American chargé d'affaires, after examining the constitutional text, readily acknowledged it and withdrew. Imagine the surprise of the Government on receiving the next day a threatening note signed by the chargé d'affaires, insisting that the resolution indicated in the memorandum should be passed by the Haitian Chambers, and setting in the form of an ultimatum a time limit within which the resolution must be passed."

The demand on Mexico is of the self-same character as that which was presented to Haiti. The State Department in Washington virtually said: "We care nothing about your Constitution, nor whether your President is or is not authorised by it to sign treaties. We insist on his signing a treaty and our will must be done by hook or by crook." [7]

And yet when the Italians were massacred in New Orleans and the Italian Government requested the Federal Government in Washington to see that the murderers were duly punished, it pleaded its inability under the Constitution, which bestows sovereignty in such matters on the individual state. If we imagine Italy, Japan and Russia urging the American Government to violate the Constitution or modify it on pain of being economically boycotted, we shall be able to understand the feelings of Mexicans.

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[7] It was signed in September, 1915.

"The Haitian Government, after the landing of the American troops, was actually nothing more than a purely nominal government. It had neither the power to enforce its authority, nor finances. The American military authorities had taken possession of the custom houses, had invaded the territory of the nation, and, by the establishment of martial courts, had practically suppressed the Haitian administration of justice. The protests of the Government against these acts of interference in internal politics had remained a dead letter. And it was 'to put an end to these difficulties and to obtain the liberation of the territory that was formally promised' that it had to yield."

The treaty of "friendship" thus imposed by brute force was observed by the Haitians who had no choice but to carry it out. The United States Government being free availed themselves of their liberty and broke it. This is a grave charge to levy against the great Republic which is continually preaching the sacredness of public treaties and the immutability of service contracts in Mexico. But the Haitians substantiate their charges by striking facts. "Instead of simply keeping to the régime fixed by the treaty, the Haitian Government was constantly obliged by the American officials to take unjustified initiatives. It was forced to accept the placing of American superintendents in charge of the postal service and of the Ministry of Public Education, with salaries equal to, and in some cases even higher than, those of the State Secretaries.

"At the municipal councils it was obliged to appoint so-called council officers who had actually the exclusive administration of the communes and absolute control of municipal affairs, including revenues and expenses. This state of affairs not provided for in the treaty gave rise to regrettable conflicts. When a Council officer (American) was confronted by an administrator of finances and provisional prefect (Haitian official) wishing to investigate the accounts of the commune, as the law obliges him to do, it always ended either with the forced silence of the Haitian official or with all kinds of difficulties which he had to face simply because he was trying to do his duty."

What Mexicans had to expect from the "police force" which was to have maintained 'peace and order' in Tampico when the two gunboats were despatched thither by the United States Navy Department in July, 1921, was foreshadowed by what a similar force effected in Haiti. "Internal peace could not be preserved"—the Memoir goes on to say—"because the permanent and brutal violation of individual rights of Haitian citizens was a perpetual provocation to revolt, because the terrible military despotism which has ruled in Haiti for the last six years has not created and could not create for the Haitian people that security which it was hoped the application of the treaty would bring about. Among other things, it is sufficient to call attention here to the system of *corvée,* that is to say, forced unpaid labour on public roads, imposed for military purposes upon the Haitian peasant. This will give some idea of why the gendarmerie, aided and encouraged by the American Occupation, instead of assuring respect for individual rights, caused the revolt known as the revolt of the Cacos for the repression of which so many useless atrocities were committed by the marines in our unhappy country. This gendarmerie in spite of the aid of the marines of the Occupation and the use of the most modern armament (machine guns, military planes, armoured cars, etc.) was never able, by purely military methods, to contend with these undisciplined and unarmed bands known as Cacos. Therefore, it is ineffective. And if it is ineffective it is because, in spite of the repeated warnings of the Government, the personnel which composes it was not chosen as it should have been. In fact, it contains men 'wanted' by the Haitian courts for criminal acts (robberies, murders, etc.) Examination of the archives of the Ministries of the Interior and of Justice of Haiti will throw light on this subject."

Thus to entrust common criminals with the work of preventing crime and advancing the cause of morality is surely not in harmony with the methods approved by the United

States Government. It is like casting out devils by Beelzebub.

"Official documents of Haiti," the Memoir continues, "clearly confirm that the treaty of September 16th, 1915, *has never been carried out by the American Government.*" One could hardly credit such a statement were not the facts on which it is based clear and incontrovertible. All the greater is the amazement of Mexican politicians at the consuming desire of the State Department in Washington to have another treaty to experiment with in Mexico and to get it signed before recognising the Obregón Government. The people of the United States in whose name such conventions are made cannot be aware of these damaging facts which place it in the unenviable position of competing with Carranza and outstripping him in the race.

The avowed aims of the United States Government in Mexico are exactly the same as those which moved it to hasten to the help of Haiti. They were enumerated in the preamble to the Haitian treaty as "the maintenance of public peace and the establishment of the finances on a sound basis and the economic development of Haiti."

How these voluntarily assumed obligations were carried out by the official representatives of the great American democracy is set forth by the Haitian people as follows:

"No effective aid has been brought to Haiti for the development of its agricultural and industrial resources, and no constructive measure has been proposed for the purpose of placing its finances on a really solid basis.

"By the terms of Article 2, paragraph 8, of the convention, the President of Haiti appoints, upon the nomination of the President of the United States, a Financial Adviser who will be an official attached to the Ministry of Finances. The adviser is then a Haitian official paid $10,000 (American gold) annually by the Haitian public treasury. But in reality the Financial Adviser is not responsible to the Haitian Government. On the contrary, his actions indicate his purpose to subject it to his will.

"Numerous facts show the omnipotence which the Financial Adviser arrogates to himself. Nothing more strikingly illustrates this than the confiscation by the Financial Adviser, with the support of the American Minister, of the salaries of the President of the Republic, the State Secretaries and the members of the Legislative Council, because the Government had refused to insert in the contract of the National Bank of Haiti (which is controlled by the National City Bank of New York), a clause prohibiting the importation into Haiti of foreign gold coins, which the Financial Adviser wanted to force upon them.

"If there be any special kind of help which the United States is better qualified to give than any other nation on the globe it is financial. And the Convention with Haiti provided for this expressly. Article II says:

" 'The (American) Financial Adviser shall inquire into the validity of the debts of the Republic, shall keep the two Governments informed regarding all future debts, shall recommend improved methods of collecting and applying the revenues, and shall make such recommendations to the State Secretary for Finances as are judged necessary for the well-being and prosperity of the Republic.' . . . No inquiry into the validity of our debts has been made. No improved method of collecting the revenues has been recommended. No recommendation for the well-being and prosperity of the Republic has yet been made to the Haitian Government.

"Now we come to the strangest phase of the situation from the point of view of the Haitian Government; not only have American officials done nothing that could have been done for the intellectual development and economic prosperity of the country, but they oppose the Government's work in this direction. Numerous projects for laws dealing with the finances, agriculture, public education, administrative and rural organisations meet with either the direct opposition of the American officials, or lie unanswered in the archives of the American Legation.

"Particular resistance is made to projects dealing with the education of the people, such as for the preparation of teachers

for primary education, industrial and agricultural schools, secondary or higher education, and for the construction of school buildings.

" . . . The Financial Adviser 'refused appropriations for three Associate Professors from the University of France who were offered to the Haitian Government by the French Government for the Lycee of Port-au-Prince.' "

Those and other charges against the American forces of occupation are superlatively damaging. A Naval Court of Inquiry was called for and sent to the country, but, according to the Memoir, "all Haitians who had anything to say regarding the numerous cases of murder, brutality, robbery, rape, arson, etc., that is, Haitians who wished to convince the Court of Inquiry of the way in which the forces of the Occupation had carried out their duty in Haiti," were systematically excluded. Many of them have published in the press of Haiti the letters which they sent to the Court demanding to be heard. . . . "Witnesses testified on the case of Lieut. Lang, accused of having killed three prisoners with his own hand at Hinche, making them go out of the prison one at a time, firing a revolver shot in the back of each one. . . .

"In Haiti numberless abominable crimes have been committed. To give some idea of their horror we cite *only* a few cases made public through the press which the Naval Court did not feel the need to investigate.

"Execution by the Marines of Joseph Marseille and his two sons, Michel and Estima Marseille, of Princivil Mesadieux, Baye Section, District of Mirebalais; assassination by the marines of Guerrier Josaphat and one of his children, aged 14, in his own house, acts denounced by M. Louis Charles, Sr., December 8, 1920.

"Arrest by an American officer, and mysterious disappearance of M. Charrite Fleuristone, former school inspector at Chappelle, District of Saint Marc. He was arrested in the first part of 1919, at the same time as MM. Jean Baptiste and Clement Clerjeune.

"At Marin, District of Mirebalais, in December, 1919, assassination and mutilation of Joseph Duclerc, a respectable old man of sixty, by marines and gendarmes. After the crime they burned his cottage.

"At the same time and in the same section the same group fired on a school-teacher and wounded her in the mouth. She managed to escape. The marines and gendarmes burned her house as well as everything that went with it. They were accompanied by an American officer, a lieutenant, whose name can be established by an investigation.

"Near Marin, at Collier, District of Mirebalais, the same band cut the head off a blind man named Neis, 25 years old, and did the same thing to a child who was with him, named Jules Louisville.

"On the same day (in January, 1919) the same band of marines and gendarmes surprised Esca Estinfil in his house at Caye-Beau with his young sons. They shot all three, father and children. Then they robbed his house and burned it. Esca was a great planter, and had a large quantity of coffee stored, and a good sum of money ready for commercial transactions.

"On January 25, 1919, at 'Savane Longue' near Marin, a group of marines and gendarmes coming from Terre-Rouge, District of Mirebalais, killed Hon. Auré Bayard, who was ill in bed. They pulled him from his bed and shot him through and through. The house was robbed and burned. Then they forced Madame Auré Bayard, by striking her with the butt ends of their rifles, to take the things that they had just stolen and carry them along with them. It was not until the next day that the poor woman could render her last services to her husband.

"On January 30th some marines and gendarmes led by spies named Néis (des Orangers) and Auré Fleury (du Carrefour grand-mat), killed a pregnant woman in a place called Thomaus. The cottage was robbed.

"In December, 1919, some marines and gendarmes coming from Saut d'Eau or Mirebalais arrived at the second station of the Crochus, District of Mirebalais, and shot, at Beauvoir, Saint-Félix Geffratd, who lived with his two little daughters, aged 8 and 12 years. The terrified children managed to escape the shots of the assassins.

"Bodily tortures were inflicted by the American captain of gendarmerie, Fitzgerald Brown, upon M. Polydor St. Pierre, clerk of the St. Marc Police Court, in the prison of that town. He was arrested on January 3, 1919, on a false charge of theft, and was imprisoned for six months. Brown administered the 'water-cure' to him and burned his body with a red-hot iron; to say nothing of the beatings and other tortures which he inflicted upon him. St. Pierre vainly begged a hearing from the Naval Court of Inquiry.

"Hanging of Fabre Yoyo from a mango tree on March 13, 1919, at Pivert, on property belonging to the Orius Paultre family of St. Marc; execution on this same property this same day of two young boys of 14 and 15 years, Nicholas Yoyo and Salnave Charlot, by Captain Fitzgerald Brown.

"Among the crimes perpetrated in the region of Hinche, Maissade, from 1916 to 1919, by Lieutenants Lang and Williams, acts little known and denounced by M. Méresse Wooley, former Mayor of Hinche, on December 10, 1920, in the *Courier Haitien,* are the following: (1) M. Onexil hanged and burned alive in his house at Lauhaudiagne; (2) execution of Madame Eucharice Cadichon at Mamon; (3) execution of Madame Romain Brigade at l'Hermitte near Maissade; (4) execution of Madame Prevoit with a baby of a few months at 'Savane-a-Lingue' on her own property.

"In the prisons of Cap-Haitien, during the years 1918, 1919 and 1920 more than four thousand prisoners died.

"At Chabert, an American camp, 5,475 prisoners died during these three years, the average being five deaths a day.

"At Cap-Haitien, in 1919, eight corpses of prisoners a day were thrown into the pits.

"Before American Occupation and the seizure of the prisons by the American officers the number of prisoners in the Cap-Haitien prison did not exceed on an average forty a year."

The Memoir concludes as follows: "The Haitian Republic was the second nation of the New World—second only to the United States—to conquer its national independence. We have our own history, our own traditions, customs and national spirit, our own institutions, laws, and social and political organization, our own culture, our own literature (French language), and our own religion. For 111 years the little Haitian nation has managed its own affairs; for 111 years it has made the necessary effort for its material, intellectual and moral development as well as any other nation—better than any other nation, because it has been from the first absolutely alone in its difficult task, without any aid from the outside, bearing with it along the harsh road of civilisation the glorious misery of its beginning. And then, one fine day, under the merest pretext, without any possible explanation or justification on the grounds of *violation of any American right or interest,* American forces landed on our national territory and actually abolished the sovereignty and independence of the Haitian Republic.

"We have just given an account of the chief aspects of the American Military Occupation in our country since July 28, 1915.

"It is the most terrible régime of military autocracy which has ever been carried on in the name of the great American democracy.

"The Haitian people, during these past five years, has passed through such sacrifices, tortures, destructions, humiliations, and misery as have never before been known in the course of its unhappy history.

"The American Government, in spite of the attitude of wisdom, moderation, and even submission which it has always found in dealing with the Haitian Government, has never lived up to any of the agreements which it had solemnly entered into with regard to the Haitian people."

Seldom has such a tremendous indictment been framed against the official representatives of any great people in modern times. Compared with this selection of crimes said to have been committed in the name of the greatest democracy, the excesses perpetrated in Mexico during the whole heat of civil war and published by Mr. Fall, fade into relative insignificance. For in the latter case the misdeeds occurred during a ruthless struggle between two infuriated sections of the community, whereas in the other a group of culture-bearers entered the country in the name of humanity, tendered the hand of friendship to the people, struck up binding agreements which they never lived up to, were received with peaceful resignation and then, we are told, burned the houses and shot and tortured the inhabitants and destroyed the independence of the Republic.

And throughout this lugubrious document which, fair-minded Americans hope, will bring about a thorough investigation, one is confronted with the ominous refrain: "The American Government has never lived up to any of the agreements which it had solemnly entered into with regard to the Haitian people."

It is easy to realise the effect which the warning note sounded by this historic Memoir must have had on Mexicans who fancied they saw their own turn coming next. And all the Latin-American Republics look with deep concern on the outcome of the Mexican situation, much as Ulysses regarded his plight in the cave of Polyphemus when his comrades were being devoured by the Cyclops one by one.

The central defects, it seems to me, of those who frame the Mexican policy of the United States, lie in the oppressive narrowness of their horizon, their ignorance of the character and strivings of the Mexicans and their liability to be influenced rather by the few restless wealth-hunters who uplift their voices in angry protest than by the humanitarian sentiments of the inarticulate American people. There is no doubt that the American nation wishes well to Mexico and would willingly help her out of her present troubles. It is equally certain that Secretary Hughes is animated by a sincere desire to remove all misunderstandings between the two Governments. And yet despite these laudable intentions we see the ill-fated Republic being slowly strangled to death because the heads of the State Department in Washington having put gyves on its feet and manacles on its hands insist on its attuning its progress towards normal international life to the quick march of Yankee Doodle.

This matter of studying the psychology of the neighbouring countries with which they have continually to deal is well worth the attention of American statesmen, some of whom may have been surprised to learn that Mr. Henry Lane Wilson, who was once Ambassador in Mexico, contrived to earn the resentment not only of Mexicans but, it is also reported, of Latin-Americans generally.[8] Secretary Hughes in a speech at an Odd Fellow meeting went to the heart of the matter when, in paying a tribute to fraternities, he said: "I wish nations might be committed to the same fraternal relations . . . out of fraternity comes understanding, and if nations possessed understanding and sought to deal fraternally with one another, they could dwell together as the United States and Canada have for more than a century without fortifications along thousands of miles of border."[9]

If we compare those wise words with the deeds of which Haiti, Santo Domingo and other neighbouring States complain and with the impression produced by the United States foreign policy abroad, the practical conclusion stands out that between saying and doing there is a chasm. The Filipinos, despite petitions, arguments, protests and patience,[10] have not yet been vouchsafed their long-promised independence. Mexico is being starved into bolshevism or submission not only without sinister intent but for her own good and the highest interests of humanity. On the other hand the oppressive misrule which afflicts Venezuela is actually approved by the United States' official representative there. Porto Rico's claims to independence go unheeded. Santo Domingo is mourning the loss of her sovereignty as irreparable. In Spain Deputy A. Barcia y Trelles writes: "There are notorious reasons for affirming that the United States is going ahead with dissimulation and preparing for the total domination of the Continent across the Atlantic. Conditions changed radically with the

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[8] "According to a report which has reached officials here," writes the *Mexican Post*, "King Victor Emanuel of Italy has notified the State Department of the United States that Henry Lane Wilson who was appointed Ambassador to Italy is a persona non-grata." Cf. *Mexican Post*, July 16, 1921.

[9] Speech delivered on April 26th, 1921.

[10] See Letter of the Director of the Philippine Press Bureau in the New York *Times*, June 26th, 1921.

World War. The strength and economic power of Europe in the new Continent, if not to-day, will in the very near future be inferior to those of North America."[11]

"You are always talking to me of principles," Tsar Alexander I once remarked to Talleyrand. "As if your public law were anything to me; I do not know what it means. What do you suppose that all your parchments and your treaties signify to me?" From the lips of a Russian autocrat these words appear natural if anti-social. To-day there is probably not one civilised power on the globe which would not promptly dismiss and disavow any of its representatives abroad who should employ such language. For we ascribe a sacramental virtue to phrases. But acts which tally with Alexander's sentiments may be committed not only with impunity but with the moral certainty that they will be applauded as "one hundred per cent patriotic."

It is but just to point out that a considerable section of the United States press has called upon Mr. Harding to order an immediate investigation of the Haitian atrocities.[12] "In the face of the terrific arraignment of our record of military occupation in Haiti," writes one widely circulating journal, "now laid before the Government at Washington by delegates from that island, it is impossible for Mr. Harding to postpone that full investigation which events in Haiti have long demanded.

"The language of the Haitian protest is more than strong. But it is also specific, *and many of the charges are corroborated by American observers in the island.* An investigation, for example, would be justified by the findings of so competent an observer as Harry A. Franck who in the *Century Magazine* tells a story of American oppression, of callousness to life on the part of many of our soldiers and officers there, and of a lack of discipline, which the best sentiment of the American people will not tolerate if proved to be true."[13]

Unhappily in the Haitian as in the Mexican issue it takes a long time for the best sentiment of the American people to make itself heard and felt and in the meanwhile wrongs are inflicted which can never be repaired.

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[11] Cf. *La Libertad* (of Madrid) 11th May, 1921.

[12] The *New York Evening Post,* the *Century Magazine,* the *Nation,* the *New York Herald,* May 9th, 1921, and others.

[13] *New York Evening Post,* May 9th, 1921.

The Republic of Santo Domingo is almost as vociferous in its protests and as despairing of its future as that of Haiti. And yet the troops of the American Occupation are about to be withdrawn thence—under conditions which the best sentiment of the American people must condemn as decisively as the misdeeds of its forces in Haiti. "The Harding Administration," writes one of the principal Dominican press organs, "with the most absolute tranquillity has declared us slaves of the White House, slaves of ambitious capitalists, slaves of that Republic which boasts itself the freest on earth." A joint protest signed by the editors of all the important newspapers states that the conditions of the withdrawal of the American troops deprives the people of their liberties, of their fiscal and legislative rights, of their schools, etc. The editors urge the whole Dominican people to unite in passive resistance to this encroachment on their sovereignty. The newspaper *El Tiempo* appeared with a funeral oration over the Dominican Republic. "Alas for us and for our children; for the captivity will be eternal!" The American journal[14] from which these extracts are reproduced comments thus on the work of moralising the Dominican people by the military forces of the great democracy: "Have we as a people so far forgotten our republican principles as to charter our bureaucrats and soldiers to subjugate whatever weaker peoples they may find convenient? That is exactly what we have permitted in the case of Santo Domingo. It is imperialism of the most dangerous sort, because it is the imperialism not of a nation, but of a nation's servants, acting irresponsibly."[15]

All this is surely far removed from what Mr. Hughes had in view when aspiring for his country to the moral leadership of the world, on the ground that it is the foremost among the progressive nations. But it is nowise far removed from the fate which Mexicans believe would be theirs if they too should fall under the moral guardianship of the great "Democracy of prohibition and righteousness." And one should make due allowance for this grounded apprehension when examining the motives of Mexico's reluctance to find herself isolated from the eastern world and left face to face with the United States. A people which has already lost more than half of its territory to its great democratic neighbour, which is threatened with the prospect of losing more, which is having its treasures systematically drained by the new-rich of that assimilative Republic, is now being called upon to change its Constitution and alter its laws in order to enable those capitalists to exploit the natural resources of the country more easily,—such a people cannot be expected hurriedly to conclude a treaty—even though it be termed of "amity and commerce"—with the great moralising neighbour. The examples of Haiti and Santo Domingo corroborate its own experience and confirm the belief that the character of States like that of individuals rarely changes.

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[14] Taken from the *New Republic,* July 13, 1921.

[15] *Ibidem.*

It is not an easy matter to dispossess Mexicans of the notion that at the bottom of those fine phrases about the moral advancement of backward peoples, a policy of righteousness and a reign of justice, lurks hypocrisy of the rankest type. They refuse to make a distinction between the worst sentiment of the servants of the United States Government, and the best sentiment of the American people which is ignored by the former while republics are being shorn of their sovereignty and is invoked only when the wrong can no longer be righted. They make the State responsible for its chosen agents and condemn and fear both equally.

But it is not only the Mexicans who view the inspiriting watchwords and shibboleths of the great American people in the unfavourable light shed upon them by the deliberate acts of its representatives. In most countries of the world the verdict is the same, but being seldom reproduced in the United States it is hardly known, and is certainly not realised, there. If it were, the grotesqueness of the contrast between the noble aspirations towards the moral guardianship of the world voiced by well-intentioned but naïve statesmen and the repellent instincts and brutal misdeeds of their representatives and agents in weak States would have long since appealed to the Yankee sense of humour. The Mexicans, however, appreciate it keenly. They put Mr. Hughes' lofty ideal of the fraternity of peoples side by side with the blood-thirst, violence and cruelty of the culture-bearers who have been operating in Haiti and with the imperialistic feats of those who have been uplifting Santo Domingo. "This is a period," writes a representative New York journal, "when the motives of the United States and its relation to other nations of the world are being seriously questioned. Altruistic expressions of our views and intent are the common language of politicians of both parties and all groups. . . . The aspersion of hypocrisy which is already cast upon us . . . can with difficulty be warded off."

As an instance of the way in which the idiosyncrasies of Washington diplomacy appear to plain-dealing public men in Europe, Lord Robert Cecil's recent remarks may be worth reproducing. Speaking[16] on the subject of mandates before the Council of the League of Nations, he said that "if that problem was at a standstill it would be the fault of the United States who did not want it to be solved without them but at the same time refused the invitations of the Chancellor of the League." And an influential British journal declares that the effort to draw closer the Latin-American Republics to the United States "has hitherto been checked by fear on the part of the South and Central American States that the great North American Republic has a half-formed desire to dominate the whole Western Continent and reduce the sister Republics there to a state of tutelage under their powerful neighbour. . . . The chief basis for Latin-American dubiety in regard to the United States is mainly their uncertainty as to the policy of the latter in regard to Mexican affairs. If this is cleared up and guarantees are given in respect to the United States' intentions regarding South America there is no doubt that the political organisations of the whole Continent, with the exception of Canada, would tend to draw closer together, so as to enable the Western hemisphere as a whole to stand in a firmer position with regard to the economic, financial and military power of Europe, backed now by the rising nations of the Far East."[17] That is exactly what Mexico desires to have—guarantees in respect to the United States' intentions.

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[16] At Geneva on September 7th, 1921.

"United States morality," Mexicans declare, "smells of oil. Oil is the motive power of its Mexican policy." Take, for instance, the recent despatch of warships to Tampico coincidently with the outbreak of the revolution expected and announced by certain oil companies' agents. Its avowed object was to quell the disorders which these oil corporations confidently anticipated as a certain result of their own act of suspending operations and throwing thousands of Mexican workmen out of employment. A more suspicious looking combination of circumstances it would be hard to imagine. And when it is illumined by the allegation of the oil companies' whilom friend, General Pelaez, that to his knowledge a large sum of money was paid by one of the oil corporation's agents (he mentions names) to the chief of the rebels, one can readily understand the feelings of Mexicans. "An American steamer," we read in a provincial American journal, "carrying American cargo was tied up for more than a month at Buenos Aires because longshoremen declared a strike. American property was by that strike damaged to the extent of several thousand dollars a day. . . . There was no suggestion during the 'Martha Washington's' enforced internment at Buenos Aires that the United States despatch a couple of warships to the Argentinian port to stand by in case the hostility of the strikers threatened to imperil the skipper's life or the property in his care. To have suggested such a course would have been to incur the charge of criminal feeble-mindedness. Had the *Martha Washington* been engaged in the oil trade and had she docked at Tampico instead of Buenos Aires, the inference is strong that our Government's attitude would have been less restrained. It makes a difference in whose bailiwick American property is threatened. If it is threatened in the territory of a first-class Power our State Department writes notes. If it is threatened in Mexico our War Department sends battle cruisers. It makes a difference also what kind of American property rights are jeopardised. If it is cable rights in Yap, we complain to the Supreme Council. If it is oil rights in Tampico, we despatch a young fleet with orders to the Commanding Officer to land an army of occupation.

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[17] The *Daily Telegraph*, Sept. 7, 1921.

"The cry of imperilled American interests comes loud from Tampico but it is a cry with an oily overtone. The deadly petroleum virus is once more at work to poison our relations with our Southern neighbour. Obregón's Government seems abundantly capable of protecting American lives, but unfortunately it is not American lives over which the State and Navy Department are so strangely exercised, but American oil."[18]

The influence of oil is, it must be admitted, answerable for the eclipse of truthfulness, the distortion of facts, the twisting of moral principles and the perpetuation of rank injustice disguised as human fellowship and altruism. It was solicitude for the oil interests that led Secretary Fall to assert that the British Government controls one of the principal oil companies working in Mexico, to accuse it of unduly favouring these and to maintain an attitude of dignified silence when both statements were publicly proven to be untrue. It was solicitude for the oil interests that moved the State Department in Washington to insist upon a new agreement being made retroactive and the sacred property rights of non-Americans in Mesopotamia being set summarily aside in order that Americans should acquire them. That Department contended that the concessions received years ago by British subjects and by the nationals of other countries should be declared null and void in the same off-handed way in which Carranza is accused of having proceeded with American rights. And Lord Curzon who in this case championed the sacredness of private property pointed out the inconsistency of this attitude with that which the same State Department is taking up "in regard to similar American interests in Mexico." He further laid stress on the odd circumstance that, while the State Department contends that the oil resources of the world should be drawn upon for development without reference to nationality, still, by Article 1 of the Philippine Constitution[19] (the oil companies make a speciality of Constitutions) participation in the working of all public lands containing petroleum *is confined to citizens or corporations of the United States or the Philippines,* and he expressed his regret that this enactment contradicts the general principle of the United States. Lord Curzon might have added, had he been aware of the fact, that one of the candidates of the American corporations for the Presidency of the Mexican Republic is already bound by agreement, should he be put in power, to accord to American citizens a decided preference over all other nationals in the matter of oil concessions.

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[18] The *Virginian Pilot* (Norfolk, Virginia). See also the *Mexican Post,* July 24, 1921.

Is it to be wondered at that it is in the light of these backslidings from grace that Mexicans interpret the terms righteousness, moral guidance and altruism which are so often wafted to their ears on the breezes that blow from the northern bank of the Rio Grande?

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[19] Adopted on August 31st, 1920.

CHAPTER XXII

CONCLUSION

THE degree to which the sonorous phrases of American politicians about altruism, humanitarianism and righteousness are at variance with what appears to be the settled policy of imperialism originated and furthered by propagandist intrigue and subsequently acquiesced in by the responsible leaders of the great Western Democracy, is not realised by the American or European public. Nor can it be divined under the present system by which the wells of public information in the United States are controlled and "doctored." I have never during my various travels on the planet beheld any parallel to it in any country—the Tsardom included—with the sole exception of Bolshevist Russia, and there the press is gagged openly and professedly. The main characteristics of public opinion enumerated by the late W. G. Sumner hold good to-day. Were it otherwise the public would apprehend the real nature of the feelings entertained towards the great imperialistic Democracy, as they know it, by all Central American Republics and by almost all the peoples of Latin-America. But, unhappily, the bulk of the population, which has little in common with its political leaders, cannot see the Republic as others see it. Even French publicists, whose general bias is to flatter the United States, feel constantly impelled to apply caustic criticism to the political methods and principles of the candidate-nation for the moral leadership of the world, which "thrusts aside treaties and refuses to be bound by the word of its President." In this connection some of the outspoken comments of that press would amply repay perusal. Those of M. Saint Brice, for example—who upbraids the United States for having "repudiated the signature of her President," and reproaches her late President with having "craftily tried bias" in order to undo covertly what he had done openly in connection with the Shantung question: "Slyly he advised China to refuse her signature,"—impute sinister tactics to the nation of which one may be sure the nation itself would never have approved.

Without formally endorsing those grave accusations one cannot but see that vital interests are at stake in the vague new political doctrines of a group of men headed by Mr. Fall and in the very definite practices of the troops of occupation and of other public servants of the great Democracy. The general trend of contemporary civilisation is frankly hostile to those dogmas and practices and the thinking world is growing more and more suspicious of the moral tone and truthfulness of those who inculcate and practise them.

A system of double weights and measures is always odious and in a country which is to serve as the moral guide of nations it is superlatively so. And that such a system is a feature of the foreign policy of the United States will be gainsaid by no impartial student of contemporary history. Leaving on one side the Haitian atrocities and the imperialistic policy towards Santo Domingo, we need only take as an illustration "the doctrine of American property" as unfolded by Secretary Hughes. "Mexico is free," he says, "to adopt any policy which she pleases with respect to her public lands, but she is not free to destroy without compensation valid titles which have been obtained by American citizens under Mexican laws. A confiscatory policy strikes not only at the interests of particular individuals, but at the foundations of international intercourse." Now if this be true it is just as applicable to the United States as to Mexico, and may be invoked with as much force by the State Department in Tokio as by the State Department in Washington. It might happen that Japan some day should turn to account in California the Hughes doctrine of "the safe-guarding of property rights against confiscation" and the Hughes denial that Mexico is "free to destroy without compensation valid titles which have been obtained by American citizens under Mexican laws." But of course Japanese rights on the Pacific Coast are another question. Our Mexican policy smells strongly of oil. Indeed, no effort is being made to conceal the odour.[1] Nor should it be forgotten that the property rights which are so sacred in Mexico are brushed aside by the State Department when they belong to foreigners in Mesopotamia.[2] If Mexico follows the example of many other independent states and forbids foreigners to acquire lands within a certain number of miles from the land and sea frontiers, a deafening outcry is raised in the United States and the repeal of the obnoxious statute is peremptorily called for. But the circumstance is withheld from the people that Mexico has kept well within her sovereign rights in this and might go further without overstepping the bounds. Nor has due attention been paid to the fact that the Government of Jamaica introduced a bill into the Legislative Council to prevent aliens from holding lands in any part of the island—a measure which will seriously affect the American companies now operating there.[3] Down to three years ago and possibly still to-day Russia had a law of the same tenor as that of Mexico. Germany possessed another of the like character. In Finland no foreigner could acquire land anywhere without the enactment of a special statute in each case for the purpose by the Legislature—a procedure which was well nigh prohibitive. But no Government has thought or thinks of protesting against such limitations of "American rights."

In the France of to-day the alien restriction laws recently passed by the Chamber are drastic enough to warrant not merely diplomatic notes and protests but much more heroic measures on the part of a Government which objects to the mild self-protective legislation of the Mexican Republic. "Under the new law," we read, "no foreigner is permitted to exercise the professions of customs-broker, transport agent, information bureau, immigration and emigration agents, director of an employment bureau, proprietor of a hotel, café or cabaret, director, administrator or proprietor of a newspaper, unless express permission has been first obtained from the Government. Thousands of Americans living in Paris will be affected by the law." If an enactment of this tenor were entered on the Mexican statute book what a howl of indignation would be raised in the United States! And yet the Mexican Congress would be merely exercising its sovereign powers. But what is meet and proper for all other independent States is to be forbidden to the Southern Republic. And the only intelligible principle on which such a curtailment of sovereignty can be defended is one which assumes that Mexico is become a "sphere of influence" of the United States.

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[1] The (New York) *World,* June 9th, 1921.

[2] See the official Oil Correspondence between the United States and Great Britain, published in London by the British Foreign Office, and the refusal of the latter to violate the rights of property in favour of Americans.

[3] See telegram of the Associated Press, July 23, 1921.

Casting a hurried glance at the past and present relations between the two neighbouring Republics, one is forcibly struck with the broad gulf that sunders the magnanimous professions of the great Northern Democracy from its deliberate and systematic acts. The former appeal to sentiments of benevolence, humanity, brotherhood, while the latter seem rooted in greed of pelf and power and are carried out by methods which may be explained,—but can neither be justified nor excused—by the German militarist maxim that "necessity" knows no law. And in applying this maxim Mexico's would-be ethical Mentor does not recoil from the extreme of creating or fostering the appalling conditions in the sister Republic which would alone provide a warrant for regenerative action. Truth is stifled by disingenuous propagandists. Intercourse between the two peoples is craftily hindered, lest they should carry out Mr. Harding's fruitful advice and learn to know and respect each other. Excursions of America's business men are openly discouraged. Calumnies and poisonous half truths are scattered broadcast by the press, the cinematograph, books and pamphlets until the average American's mental picture of the Mexican people bears as little resemblance to the original as to the Weddas of Ceylon.

There is, however, one true feature in that distorted picture: the conditions in which the great mass of Mexicans live and work and die are a disgrace to civilisation. But the remedy lies where the cause lurks. And most of those shocking conditions are traceable to a single source, the appropriation—one might aptly term it expropriation—by foreign corporations, mainly American, of the natural wealth of the country, in circumstances which would not be tolerated elsewhere. For the righteous indignation of those who stigmatise as iniquitous Mexico's lack of respect for the sanctity of private property is linked with the all-important fact that this property was originally acquired at a time and under circumstances which, without actually destroying its technical validity, considerably lessen the sacred and inviolable character claimed for it. The individuals who sold the lands in those days, as well as the legislators whose laws sanctioned the sale, were unaware of the value which the subsequent national progress of the world would impart to the wealth of the subsoil.

To-day the Mexican people may be said to have no share in the marvellous riches of their native land. Their plight may be likened to that of Tantalus. The resources of their country go to enrich a group of affluent foreigners and to embolden these to intermeddle in every branch of government. This disinheritance which the Mexican Government is now summoned to sanction and perpetuate is at the root of the people's ignorance, of the dissatisfaction and the frequent bloody revolts—disastrous only to themselves—which stamped their impress on the recent history of the Mexican Republic. Systematic education, the maintenance of public order and the smooth working of national institutions have been made impossible by want of funds. The population is the poorest and most wretched in the civilised world. This is so true that the most effective way in which the Mexican Government could make known its case would be—were it not derogatory to the dignity of the nation—to send groups of the misery-stricken men, women and children of the Republic around the globe and let their prosperous fellow-creatures behold how the inhabitants of the richest country on earth are condemned from their birth to a slow physical and spiritual death by suffering, disease and crass ignorance, in order that a few pampered foreigners should become multimillionaires.

And not contented with their vast monopoly in the present, the enterprising oil corporations are casting around for the means of increasing it in the future. Hence their quest of political, in addition to financial, power, their alliance with pettifogging politicians and the extensive use which they make of misleading propaganda. In words they repudiate intervention, but the unswerving trend of the movement which they have called into being is intervention pure and simple. The history of Mexico for over half a century consists largely in episodes of intervention by the United States. During that brief period more than fifty per cent of Mexico's territory was seized and annexed by the sister Republic on pretexts which are being diligently kept alive by the propagandists to-day who have earmarked what remains of the Republic for Cubanisation.

By her open-handed hospitality under Diaz, Mexico enmeshed herself in a fine network of international complications from which extrication is superlatively difficult. By welcoming American capitalists she introduced American politicians within her gates and is now liable to become their ward. By admitting American clergymen to preach and teach she is deemed to have given away with her hospitality a portion of her sovereignty and to have renounced her right to legislate on matters ecclesiastical. By adopting freedom of the press she has exposed herself to the damaging charge of bolshevism and her government is held responsible for newspaper articles of which it has no cognisance.[4] If a supplementary tax is levied on the export of crude petroleum—a tax which the American Legislature was disposed to put on its importation—angry voices are uplifted in protests and the cry of confiscation is heard throughout the United States, whose citizens in the Transvaal silently endure the government tax of forty per cent on all gold and diamonds which they find in that country. If Obregón's government parcels out estates as vast as some European realms in order that Mexicans able and willing to till the land may receive suitable lots, it is forthwith accused of communism or worse. When men obnoxious to the oil corporations are offered posts in the cabinet and the candidates of these corporations are passed over—for they too have their candidates—the President is said to be in the hands of bolshevists and the country on the high road to ruin. Labour legislation, too, in cases where it merely secures a living wage for Mexican workmen is denounced as bolshevist. And so on to the end of the chapter. Thus in whatsoever direction Mexico moves she is caught and tripped up by the fine meshes of international complications woven by those foreign guests on whom she bestowed hospitality, wealth and the power inseparable from wealth.

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[4] In the month of March, 1921, some Americans who were said by a writer in a Mexican journal to have worked for intervention took umbrage because the President of the Republic did not order the articles to be stopped. They considered that to be his duty to American citizens, whatever the Mexican Constitution might say to the contrary.

The legends created and spread abroad by professional propagandists about Mexico are, to use a simile employed by Joseph de Maistre, like counterfeit coin which is struck by unscrupulous individuals who know what they are doing and is afterwards uttered by honest unsuspecting folk who intensify the evil deed unwittingly. With such counterfeit coin the United States is now inundated.

Nor does Mexico's complaint against her neighbours end here. She roundly charges them with plotting against the legally constituted government, with aiding and abetting Mexican rebels, with sending their representatives to secret conventicles in which revolutionary plans of campaign are elaborated, with donating funds to those who undertake to make war on the authorities and with securing special preferential terms for themselves and their countrymen from pretenders to the Presidency. Those are damaging indictments which undoubtedly impair the value of the State Department's assurance that Mexico is free to have any government that suits her—although one must recognise the fact that that department is not responsible for the aberrations of American citizens, nor even of American officials. These damning charges, however, are so definite and circumstantial that in all probability a good deal more will have been said and written about them before these pages have seen the light. The reader has already been apprised of General Pelaez' arraignment of his former friends, the oil men, one of whom he names as having handed a large sum of money to the leaders of the abortive June "revolution" in Tampico for the cause of the rebels. On the 17th of that same month the Ministry of the Interior in Mexico City received an official telegram from one of its agents in Nuevo Laredo containing an account of a conspirative conclave held in Montull at which Pablo Gonzales, Robles Dominquez, Francisco Murguia and Esteban Cantú were present and "held consultation with a delegate of the oil companies who arrived expressly for the purpose from Washington."[5] What degree of truth this message contained the writer of these pages is unable to determine and unwilling to discuss. He is concerned only with the fact that it was taken very seriously by the Secretary of the Interior, as were others of a still more compromising character that shortly afterwards followed. If the grim truth which will be disclosed in the near future should be found to tally with its presentment in those telegrams, the sympathy of right-minded people throughout the world for the ill-starred Mexican people will be increased a hundredfold. In the meantime it will be wise to suspend one's judgment on this, the most sinister of the alleged features of the open and covert campaign carried on against the Southern Republic, under cover of the loftiest motives that inspire human endeavour.

Mr. Hughes enjoys an enviable reputation throughout the world wherever probity is appreciated in deed or by lip-worship, and if straightforwardness and fairness were identical with statecraft he would deserve to rank with the foremost statesmen of modern times. But honesty is only one of the many elements that go to qualify a man to govern a nation and its possession, as we see, does not dispense its fortunate

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[4] *El Democrata,* June 19th, 1921. Also *El Heraldo de Mexico,* June 19th, 1921.

possessor from the acquisition or inheritance of the others. Without committing himself to any scheme for disposing of the differences between Mexico and the United States, the student of history cannot but wonder at the line of reasoning by which such an upright public worker has reached the conclusion that he can best serve his country—and possibly further the best interests of the sister Republic as well—by rendering financial credit inaccessible to the latter and thus condemning its sorely tried inhabitants to go on enduring hunger, disease and despair without visible hope of surcease or easement. Truly there is something supremely pathetic in the figures of the Presidents of the two Republics of whom both are sincerely anxious to combine the interests of their respective countries with the principles of truth, justice, human brotherhood, and yet one through his chief secretary is busy withal sapping the power of the other and strangling the Republic which this other is successfully endeavouring to save and regenerate. Mechanically one's mind wanders back to those days of yore when honest well-meaning men like Torquemada sent their honest fellow creatures to the rack and the stake with a reluctance the sincerity of which did credit to their fellow-feeling, and an anxiety to save their souls which testified to their profound religious sense. Their only drawback was what Pascal termed a false conscience, which is no uncommon phenomenon among some of the very best intentioned men of today. While hoping to further American interests which he appears to have partly identified with those of the oil corporations, Mr. Hughes has failed to take due account of those of humanity at large which occupy such a prominent place in his public utterances. This aspect of the American secretary's statecraft reminds one of what Turgot said of those who become the dupes of general ideas which are true because drawn from nature, "but which people embrace with a narrow stiffness that makes them false, because they no longer combine them with circumstances, taking for absolute what is only the expression of a relation." Their minds operate *in vacuo*.

If Mr. Hughes could but put himself mentally in the place of General Obregón and realise this President's tasks, difficulties and exertions, he would probably feel moved to help in lieu of thwarting him, and this quite as much in the interests of the United States as of Mexico. Meanwhile the unbiased outsider whose angle of observation permits him to survey both sides with equal comprehensiveness is amazed at the spectacle of the deplorable one-sided campaign that unfolds itself to his gaze. The North American statesman declares that he will recognise the Mexican Government only after it has given proof that it wields the power and possesses the will to fulfil its international obligations. Now the only proof conceivable is the experiment and Mexico is eager to make it. Mr. Hughes, however, declines to accept that and insists upon Obregón imitating President Wilson in Paris and signing a treaty which the nation will repudiate and which will have no more intrinsic worth in Mexico than that signed by the United States has had in Haiti.

The scrap of paper doctrine is gall and wormwood to Mexico, and if the Haitian Memoir signifies anything, it cannot have a particular relish for the United States. Nor does Haiti offer the only example of the kind. The treaty of amity still in force between Mexico and her northern neighbour as we saw obliges the two contracting parties to refrain from having recourse to arms and to submit their differences to arbitration. Yet that solemn obligation did not prevent Mr. Wilson from despatching an army under General Pershing to the northern provinces of Mexico, nor Mr. Harding from sending recently two warships to Tampico, congruously with Senator Fall's recommendations to the Senate. The binding power of treaties was seldom less effectual than it is to-day.

Further, the United States Government has asked Mexico to pay her debts, but refuses to allow her to raise the money. Taxation is termed confiscation and foreign loans are effectually vetoed in advance. Yet the liabilities cannot be met without having recourse to both expedients. Again the United States Government demands from Mexico full compensation for damage done to its nationals during the period of the civil war. Waiving all unsettled questions of liability and limitations, President Obregón assents and officially invites the

United States and all debtor countries to send delegates to arrange the procedure and determine the amount due. But the United States refuses to accept the invitation and induces France and Britain to follow her lead. Thereupon the propagandists of the oil companies proclaim to the world that Mexico is a defaulter and President Obregón not a whit better than President Carranza. And the bulk of the unreasoning public believes them. Lastly, President Harding, through his chief secretary, Mr. Hughes, denies official recognition to President Obregón unless he first demonstrates that his word as President is indeed worthy of trust, and the only demonstration that will satisfy him consists in Obregón deliberately violating his oath as President and publicly violating the law which he solemnly swore to observe.

Meanwhile General Obregón undeterred by these formidable hindrances and dangers pursues his own course with perseverance and serenity, relying upon the approval of his conscience and the sympathy of right-minded men and guided in all his steps by high moral ideals. His is perhaps the first concrete example of governance by morality irrespective of political controversies, party interests and ephemeral success, and for that reason among others is well worth a careful study by those public bodies and private individuals throughout the world who are interested in the spiritual advancement of mankind. His remarkable experiment, whatever may be the outcome, will leave a profound and salutary influence on the political and social thought of his generation which will make itself felt far beyond the boundaries of his native country.

THE END